



# EQUITY NEWS



SPRING EDITION  
October 2020

**ETHNIC COMMUNITIES COUNCIL OF  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

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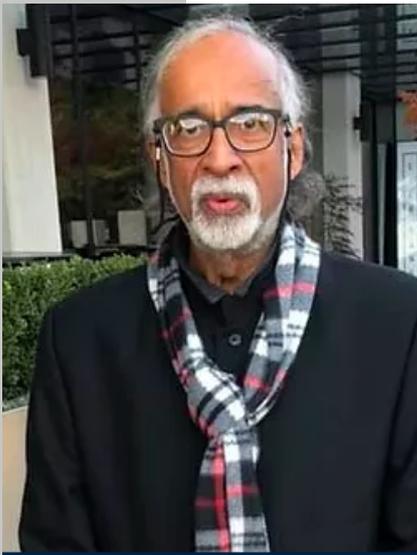
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# President's musings



It is said that, in a collection of short stories by Feng Menglong in 1627, the phrase “Better to be a dog in times of tranquillity than a human in times of chaos” was coined by the author. It is a saying that is completely appropriate for the times we have seen in the last few months!

A pandemic that has appeared on our shores and is also widely spread across the whole world has been incredibly far reaching in its impact. Already over 770,000 people have died. And there are 22 million confirmed cases that are being dealt with. These are staggering numbers of a major medical crisis.

However, there has been a side to this medical crisis that appears to have surfaced as well. This side of the pandemic does not have a vaccine to assist recovery. And it is a side that our Aboriginal brothers and sisters have endured for over 230 years. It is the disease of racism and it surfaced in all its reprehensible hatred over the period of pandemic.

Our Australians of Asiatic appearance suddenly became the target of sheer hatred and vitriol from others. Some of the manifestations of this hate were seen on posters along our freeway overpasses, posters in Gidgegannup in Perth, exclusion and derision in workplaces and the calls to talkback radio.

ECCWA has taken a very strong stance against this and has used every opportunity to utilise mainstream media to debunk all the conspiracy theories and the attribution of blame to the Chinese community.

It has been disappointing that there are people in the Upper House of State Parliament who decided that this was an opportunity for them to attack me, personally. The behaviour of Charles Smith MLC in accusing me of being a CCP and a Labor party stooge was childish and immature in the extreme.

We met with Senator Dean Smith who was instrumental in having a statement read in the Senate condemning the racism that we were observing all around Australia.

Our Executive Officer, Vivienne and her team have been diligent in sending information out constantly to our communities. These resources are in languages and are a very handy resource in informing our CaLD communities. If any of you are looking for any additional information, don't hesitate to contact us at the office.

We have also launched a Racism Matters website that allows people impacted by racism to report those acts to us. These may be acts that fall outside the Criminal Code (which is the domain of WA Police). However, we are also happy to take those on and refer them to Police. We have a very close working relationship with the relevant agency within WAPOL to ensure that action is taken to assist you.

The disappointing thing to observe with the Pandemic related issues is the fact that these attitudes lay just one extremely thin layer below the surface. We have a lot of work to do to ensure that Multiculturalism is practised at a level that allows our children to develop and grow to be the best possible in an environment of support rather than of hate and angst. And as Dr Geoff Gallop (Former Premier and Minister for Multicultural Interests in WA) has said on many occasions "Multiculturalism is still a contested issue". It is up to all of us to ensure that the contest favours us in its final iteration.

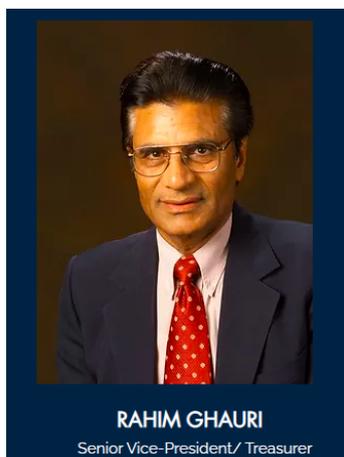
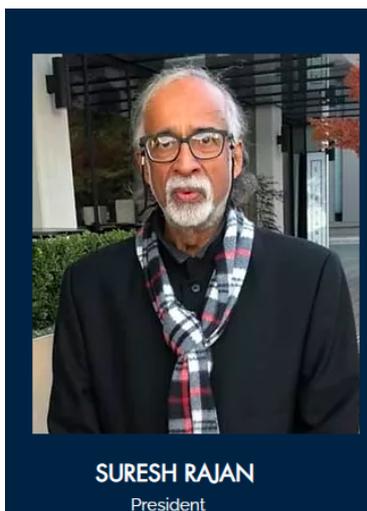
A positive initiative is the creation of a fundraising scheme, in which people can receive recognition as gold, silver etc donors according to their gift. My thanks to all the Management committee of ECCWA, our staff led ably by EO, Vivienne Pillay and all our funding bodies (OMI, Dept of Finance, WACOSS, and our partners) and stakeholders, far and wide.

**Suresh Rajan**

President

# Committee Members

## 2020 Office Bearers



# Management Committee

- **Virendra Parikh -Secretary**  
(Jain Community)
- **Champo Ngweshe**  
(Ishar Multicultural Women's Health)
- **Michael Wu**  
(Chung Wah Association)
- **Virginia Aden**  
(Sudbury Community House)
- **Camelita Baltazar**  
(Migrante Perth Inc.)
- **Jim Taylor**  
(Muslim Women's Business Assn Inc.)
- **Ranjit Ratnayake**  
(WA Sri Lankan Assn.)
- **Gaelle Gouliou**  
(The Spiers Centre)
- **Satish Nair**  
(Indian Society of WA)
- **Karla Benitez**  
(Umbrella Incorporated)

# ECCWA Response to the Harmony Alliance's Intersectionality discussion paper

## **ECCWA's responses to the discussion Questions**

- **What are the key identity markers (and intersections thereof) that shape the experiences of migrant and refugee women in Australia?**

Intersecting markers that shape the experiences of refugee and migrant women in Australia may be ethnicity, disability, race, religious diversity, poverty, lack of recognition of prior qualifications, loss of social status and poverty.

- **Are there any personal stories and case studies our members would like to share to demonstrate the lived experience of intersectional disadvantage and vulnerability as a migrant or refugee woman in Australia?**

According to the ABS 2016 census, 33 per cent of Australians are from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) background; that's one in three people; another 16% have one or both parents born in another country; speak more than 300 languages (not including many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's languages) and 20 per cent of people with disability are from CaLD backgrounds. CaLD people are not a homogenous group and are not all the same. There is diversity within diversity.

Despite this, women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) backgrounds and those with disability are not adequately represented in higher levels of employment in public and private sectors in Australia; also not represented in fashion, film and television industries, media and so on. Although women from migrant and refugee background are occasionally acknowledged and supported by the feminists to advocate for equality, women with disability especially those from CaLD background are often excluded from the feminist movements.

ECCWA's Policy and Advocacy Officer, being an Australian woman with disability from a CaLD background, has directly and indirectly experienced disadvantage when looking for employment and also in the education system through university. She would attend many job interviews but if the interviewers did not know her personally and did not know how she worked, they would not employ her, even when she had the required skills, abilities and work-experience for the position. As most men from a CaLD background can access English classes, get a job and work, women often stay home to take care of their children. Introduction of the written citizenship test has prevented so many women who had no formal education and are illiterate even in their own languages to become Australian citizens. The Federal government has cut or significantly reduced the interpreter funding of non-government community based agencies that support refugee and migrant women causing further institutionalised systemic barriers based on their sex and cultural diversity.

- **Which areas of policy and practice are most relevant and conducive to achieving intersectional responses to migrant and refugee women's distinct situations ?**

Ensuring equity in parliamentary legislation, government policies and practices in health, education, employment, housing, welfare, and so on may help with achieving responses for intersectionality for migrant and refugee women in Australia. Creating an Australian Human Rights Act and strengthening the existing discrimination legislation like the Work-place Gender Equality Act 2021, Race Discrimination Act 1975, Disability Discrimination Act 1975, Disability Discrimination Act 1992, and Australia's Multicultural Policy, may provide better equitable opportunities for women from refugee and migrant background to meaningfully participate in economic, political, cultural, and all all aspects of community life in Australia. Equity could be achieved by developing a substantive Equality Policy Framework and requiring all government departments to adhere to it. Substantive Equality Policy Framework dictates that treating people who are disadvantaged as equal as everyone else may further disadvantage them. People's needs should be met first, to bring them to the same level as everyone else. For example, if a woman from a non-English speaking background who goes to Centrelink is given the same form in English as everyone else, without an interpreter, is automatically disadvantaged. If the form is not translated into the language of the person, it would prevent or delay that person's access to the supports and services causing further damage. Another example might be the organising of an event, without a lift and inviting guests, including guests with disability who are wheelchair users and can't use the stairs. Government departments are required to adhere to the substantive Equality Framework would have to ensure that they engage interpreters and or translate their print materials in the language of their consumers, organise meetings in accessible buildings to enable participation of all of their guests when delivering services to people from non-English speaking backgrounds and those with a disability. Each Government department's implementation of the Substantive Equality framework must be regularly monitored, continuous improvement ensured, evaluated and the results should be reported in their annual reports. The Western Australian government has such a policy framework which could be used as an example, however unfortunately, it is monitored, but its continuous improvement is not measured and is not evaluated.

- **How can we best tailor our language (e.g. the use of term 'vulnerability') in our Framework and wider communication with stakeholders and decision-makers?**

The word 'vulnerability' should not apply to women from refugee and migrant backgrounds and those with disability who are not isolated, marginalised and are able to exercise their rights. Their diversity doesn't always make them vulnerable. Assuming all women from diverse backgrounds as vulnerable may disadvantage them. On the other hand, women who are isolated and marginalised due to their cultural diversity including disability, may be more vulnerable to being involved in family and domestic violence (FDV), and may experience discrimination when accessing supports and services. The word 'vulnerable' should only be used if a woman's race is acting as a barrier for her to equally access the supports, services and reduce their chances of being meaningfully included in the community life.

**Vivienne Pillay**  
Executive Officer

# ECCWA commends immigration revamp recommendations

The Ethnic Communities Council of WA commended some of the discussion currently occurring respect of Australia's immigration program. Suresh Rajan, President of the Council said "The comments coming from former senior public servants and former heads of the relevant Federal Government departments, Martin Parkinson and Peter Shergold have been extremely illuminating and worthy of commendation. Both of these learned gentlemen have called on the Federal Government to seriously consider the careful planning of an Immigration program that targets particular groups and urges the expansion of the numbers that we can comfortably accommodate here in Australia. We clearly endorse those comments.

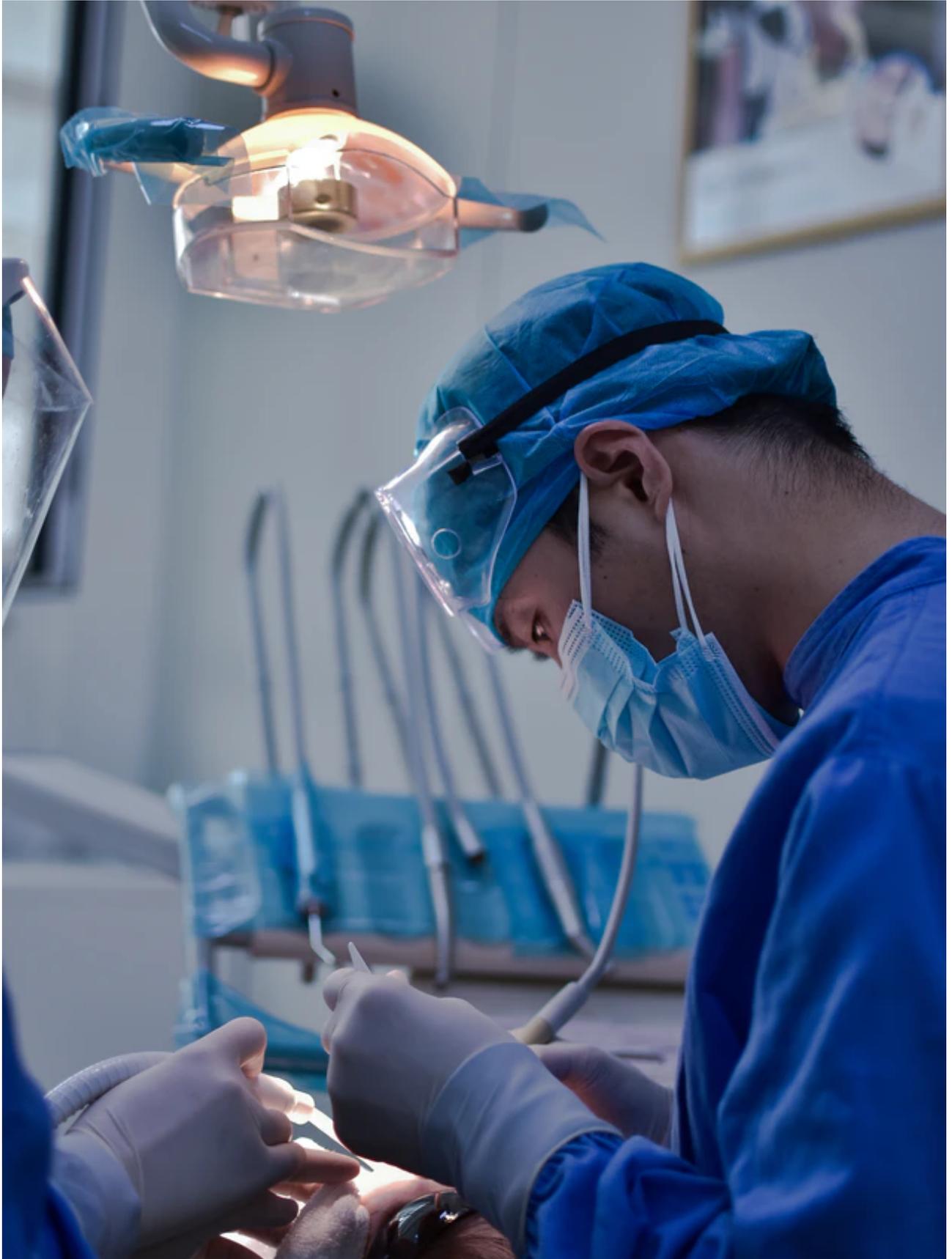
The positive economic impact of immigration to this country over the last 200+ years since colonisation has been well documented.

Professor Shergold, who ran the department in the 2000's, is quoted in the Sydney Morning Herald today as follows: "At first blush you think probably, if we're going to bring in new migrants, we should focus on the skills we need", he told The Sun-Herald and The Sunday Age.

"But it may well be that the best thing to do as we start to open up is to allow family reunion to support those migrants who have already made Australia home. "It isn't just skills. We also need to consider the needs of those who are already here to have their families join them." Professor Shergold, now chancellor of Western Sydney University, also urged the government to offer a "clear pathway" to permanent residency for temporary migrants who are already in Australia. "That should be a priority," he said. Mr Martin Parkinson, who ran the department between 2016 and 2019 and is now Chancellor of Macquarie University, urged the government to "double down" on skilled migration after the crisis. "You really try and go for broke on the skills side," he said. "We've got an opportunity to reorient the program even more than it is now to getting highly skilled migrants who can help drive economic growth and innovation and agility.

"But it really needs to be skills that are going to be important for the jobs of the future. You really want to think about these things not so much as where job vacancies are but where job vacancies will likely be."

"Irrespective of the fact that these two learned gentlemen have taken very different perspectives they have come to the same conclusion – that this is the time to increase our immigration numbers to kick start the moribund economy. Professor Shergold does caution that we need to cater for the temporary migrants that are already in the country and transition them to permanent residency. This is quite a contrast to the position taken by Labor Spokesperson Kristina Kenneally who called for a focus on Australian labour in our next program post pandemic revamp" said Suresh Rajan. "We urge the government to take heed of the views of Shergold and Parkinson when undertaking their deliberations herein."



# ECCWA reminds us of Sorry Day

The Ethnic Communities Council of WA reminds us all that today May 26th is National Sorry Day. It is a day of significance to us as we remember and apologise for all of the injustices that have been perpetrated against the First Nations People in Australia.

As Luke Pearson tweeted this morning: "The first Sorry Day was held in 1998, on the anniversary of the "Bringing Them Home" report being tabled in Federal parliament. Sorry Day isn't just a day of remembrance, it's a call to action to implement the 54 recommendations from the report... saying sorry wasn't the only recommendation".

"It is often forgotten that there were 54 recommendations made in that report. Whilst we have gone to the extent of saying Sorry to the Indigenous people, a look at the other recommendations in the report shows that we have a very long way to go to come to any real process of reconciliation that we often trumpet about. The recommendations are contained in this report: <https://bth.humanrights.gov.au/the-report/report-recommendations>" said Suresh Rajan, President of the Council.

"We urge our CaLD communities to access this report and review these recommendations therein. Let us also then urge our parliamentarians at the State and Federal levels to present their achievements against these basic human rights. These human rights are often things that we take for granted and continue to deny to the First Nations People" added Suresh Rajan.

Most of the CaLD communities that have come to this country have not been exposed to or learnt the true history of one of the oldest living civilisations on Earth. Multiculturalism is predicated on the celebration of all the different cultures that make up Modern Australia. The most significant of those cultures is the oldest of them, that of the Indigenous people resident here.

"We must do all we can to ensure that the recommendations of the report mentioned above are implemented. This will take us some way to redressing the wrongs that have been perpetrated over 200 years to our sisters and brothers from the Indigenous communities. There is so much to be done to address the much shorter life expectancy of Aboriginal People. In a rich first world nation such as we are in Australia, the treatment of Aboriginal People has been a blight on our history that is desperately overdue for change" said Suresh .



# ECCWA applauds Multicultural Policy Framework

The Ethnic Communities Council of WA congratulates the Minister for Multicultural Interests, Hon Paul Papalia on the launch of the WA Multicultural Policy Framework today in Harmony Week.

The Minister's press release stated the following after the launch this morning of that policy framework: "The framework sets out practical and measurable ways public sector agencies can ensure their operations and services are inclusive and accessible for everyone, no matter their first language or cultural heritage. It emphasises the State Government's commitment to multiculturalism and highlights the extensive benefits of our cultural and linguistic diversity - encompassing our First Peoples, those born in Australia, and the migrants from over 190 countries who make WA home."

ECCWA President Suresh Rajan said "This policy framework was developed in conjunction with the CaLD community and has had significant input from various groups including ours. We note that an important element of the new framework is the commitment to the WA Charter of Multiculturalism. That Charter was created at the time of Dr Geoff Gallop's term as Premier and has been endorsed by governments after that time. It is a seminal document that goes to the very heart of what CaLD communities are looking for in the process of integration into their new places of residence."

"Further, the policy's very strong commitment to the history and recognition of the status of Aboriginal people of this state is very important. Our position, as a council, has always been that Multiculturalism cannot exist if it further disadvantages Aboriginal people. We commend Minister Papalia and the Multicultural Advisory Group in honouring that commitment and restating that position." Suresh added.

This policy Framework will be a very useful tool for Public Service agencies, Local Governments, the Corporate sector and all others in developing their own policy positions in regard to the integration of our migrant communities. The Policy Framework document can be accessed from the website of the Office of Multicultural Interests (OMI) at:<https://www.omi.wa.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx>

We, at ECCWA will work closely with OMI and the Minister to publicise this framework. For media enquiries please contact Suresh Rajan on 0403 276 960 #MulticulturalPolicyFramework #HarmonyWeek

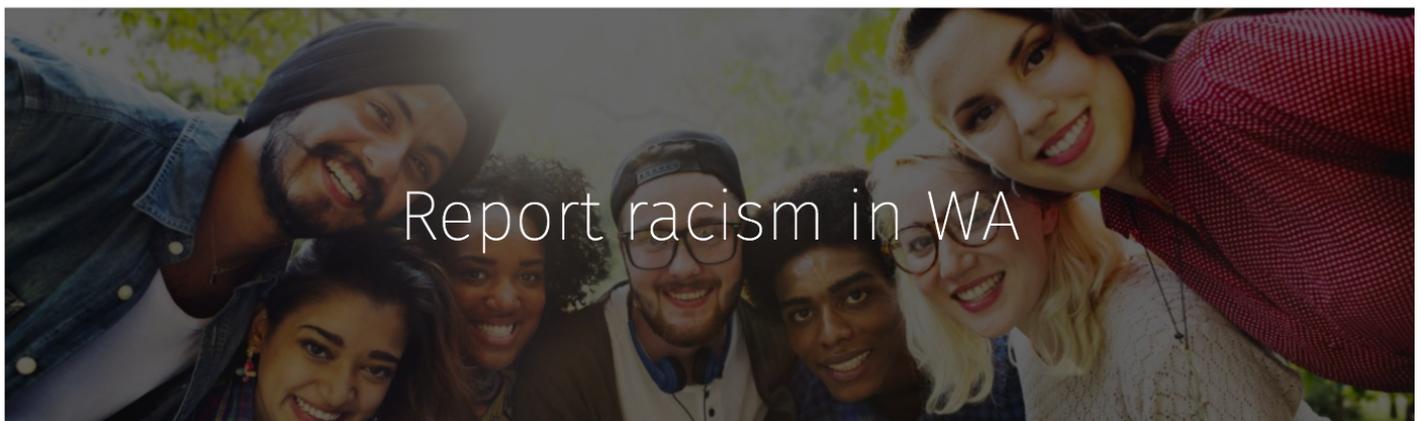
# RACISM ISSUES



# Launch of Racism Matters project

RACISM MATTERS

About Racism Matters Advice and support ▾ Report



In mid June 2020, ECCWA launched the Racism Matters team within the organisation to tackle the increasing issue of racism during COVID-19 in Western Australia. As part of this project, we have developed a website dedicated to reporting incidents of racial discrimination in the Western Australian CaLD community. The website allows members of the public to anonymously lodge a report detailing a racist incident they experienced or witnessed. The information provided to us is strictly confidential. We will never hand over information unless required by the law.

The objective of the Racism Matters platform is not to replace reporting to authorities, but rather serve as a safe place where victims of racism discrimination can express their frustration and be empowered to take action. If the victim chooses to leave their name and contact details, our advocates will follow up with them to assist in reporting the racism matter to the appropriate authorities, seek legal support and find the most suitable solution.

If you are a leader of your organisation, please share the website <http://www.racismmatters.com.au/> with your community members to help us spread awareness about this project.

# Collateral damage in the time of COVID-19

Unless it condemns racist rhetoric, Australia risks adding racial harmony to its list of COVID-19 casualties, writes Suresh Rajan.

As a person involved in the "race space" over many years in this country, it appears we are headed toward another meltdown in Australia's fragile harmony.

And we have not one leader to address this matter with the force and commitment that it requires. What we are seeing at the same time as the incessant and in my view, quite appropriate amount of quality information coming from medical and government authorities, is an outbreak of racism.

Some of this racism is viral and online through social media platforms. However, some of it is in mainstream media — electronic and written. Radio shock jocks have delighted in stirring up the blame game by referring to the virus as a "Chinese" virus. One has gone so far as to express incredulity that "China has unleashed this virus on the world and now is profiting by selling facemasks and other medical supplies."

Here are some recent examples of racism outbreaks:

- - People who appear to be Asian in origin being abused at supermarkets;
- - A Malaysian student being denied rental accommodation;
- - The Chinese being blamed for the virus;
- - Chinese restaurants seeing a marked drop off in patronage;
- - Students at some schools being mocked as "Coronas" in the playground (my son has witnessed this personally);



- - My niece – of Indian ancestry – and another young girl being abused on a train in Melbourne — the abuse was about them “being the problem” that led the abuser to have to take his children out of school;
- - Snide remarks being made to people of general “Asian” appearance;
- - Talkback hosts allowing these comments to go to air without regard for community outcomes.

While our leaders have been very good in encouraging people to go to Chinese restaurants to try and minimise the economic damage that has been caused, little has been done to call racism out explicitly.

Such racial stereotyping and name-calling has not been assisted by the President of the United States and the U.S. Senate. While the President has maximised his exploitation of the opportunity to deride China for unleashing the “Chinese virus”, the blame game has been compounded by the U.S. House of Representatives introducing a resolution to do the same. It also seeks to hold China accountable for the damage caused by a virus initiated there.



**Jennifer Bendery** ✓  
@jbendery



At a time when Trump is fueling racist "Chinese virus" rhetoric + Asian Americans are being spit on and attacked, some House lawmakers want to pass a resolution blaming China for causing a pandemic + calling on China govt to say COVID-19 started there. [huffpost.com/entry/house-re...](https://huffpost.com/entry/house-re...)



**House Lawmakers Unveil Resolution Blaming China For The ...**

At a time when Trump is fueling racist "Chinese virus" rhetoric and Asian Americans are being spit on and attacked, this seems like a [huffpost.com](https://huffpost.com)

♥ 387 8:36 PM - Mar 25, 2020



💬 603 people are talking about this



All this has done is to expose the very thin layer of racial "tolerance" that we practise in this country. It is patently obvious that the virus knows no racial or ethnic or national boundaries. The deaths in countries in broader Asia and Europe and all the continents of the world are testimony to that status.

My immediate questions are: What are we going to gain from this blame game? How does any of this "flatten the curve" of infection numbers?

People who have challenged my position in so far as the naming of the virus as a "Chinese" virus, have pointed to the Spanish Flu as an example supporting their view. It usually comes as a shock to them to learn that the Spanish Flu did not emanate from Spain but in fact came from parts of China.

It was named the Spanish Flu when the numbers of deceased in Spain exceeded those of other countries. Following such nomenclature, logic would have us calling this the "Italian" or "Spanish" virus.

But again, I ask the question: "How is this is going to assist our fight against the virus in our countries?".

Some people have pointed to the issue of "wet markets" in China and the potential breeding ground for viruses of this nature. They point to what they call "abhorrent" eating habits. There are just as many people in the world who may find the killing of sheep and cattle and other animals abhorrent.

Yes, the wet markets need to be closed down for health reasons but that is not going to happen by condemning the practice of eating what has come to be regarded as part of some people's staple diet. Surely, the process of educating the community is our best and most sustainable approach to that problem.

If there is one piece of advice I would proffer to PM Scott Morrison and Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs David Coleman or Health Minister Greg Hunt, it is to condemn these acts of sheer racist rhetoric and ask Australians to call out such acts when they see them being perpetrated. I have done that on a few occasions and generally had people think twice about the irrelevance of playing the blame game.

Let us focus our efforts on finding a way to combat the virus rather than inculcating hate in our lives.

-By Suresh Rajan. 6 April 2020



# Commercial tenancy

## Support for tenants and landlords

The Australian government has passed new laws offering greater protection for small commercial tenants who are in financial hardship resulting from restrictions imposed to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

This legislation is known as the Commercial Tenancies (COVID-19 response) Act 2020 (the CTCR Act) and applies to small commercial tenants during the emergency period, which is 6 months from 30 March 2020 to 29 September 2020 (subject to change).

The Act protects small business tenants from a range of prohibited actions, while they try to negotiate rent relief. They include:

- A moratorium on evictions due to non-payment of rent
- Termination of the lease
- Rent increases (other than rent or a component of rent determined by reference to turnover)
- Penalties for tenants who do not trade or have reduced their trading hours
- Charging interest on rent arrears or any other unpaid amount of money (including operating expenses)
- Using bonds or guarantees to recover money owing
- Progressing with proceedings against a tenant for a breach that occurred after 30 March 2020, but before the new laws come into operation.

For more information, please visit <https://smallbusinesswa.gov.au/blogs/faqs-covid-19-commercial-tenancy-changes>

# WOMEN'S ISSUES

ECCWA has been working in conjunction with the Women's Council of WA and been apart of the Family & Domestic Violence taskforce work group to ensure support for CaLD Women during the COVID-19 pandemic. Part of the work between ECCWA and the Women's Council is the development of the COVID-19 FDV Safety Plan in 9 different languages including English, Chinese, Vietnamese, Thai, Hindi, Dari, Farsi, Urdu and Arabic.

The Ethnic Advocacy and Support Team (EAST) team has also been involved a large amount of work for Family & Domestic Violence. Please view the EAST flyer below to learn more about what they do.

Ethnic Advocacy and Support Team (EAST) is a team of volunteer advocates aiming to provide advocacy and support to Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) persons facing challenging life events.

The service is being provided by the Ethnic Communities Council of Western Australia who as a charity is seeking to ensure that all CALD persons have access to services particularly when facing life's challenging events. This service will not duplicate services that are already in existence but will look to work with current funded services.



EAST will provide advocacy and referrals to existing funded services to support clients to achieve their goals.

- \* Arrange for language appropriate external counselling for clients where possible at a reasonable fee for service cost or through Medicare Health Plans.
- \* Assist clients who have accessed crisis and other services to transition into sustained recovery through ongoing advocacy and support.
- \* Assist in completing forms when required such as applications for Age pension.

**Fees and Costs**

This service is not currently funded and fees for service on a sliding scale will apply.

**Contact Details**

Phone 0452399717 or 92275322  
Email: east@eccwa.org.au

**Client Profile - Persons over 20 years**

- \* Elderly or Seniors who are needing to access the Age Pension/Age Care system who may have little or no family and or community support.
- \* Refugees who have been in the country for more than 5 years.
- \* Multicultural persons dealing with the diverse hospital systems in relation to critical/ challenging conditions.
- \* Multicultural women transitioning from Women's Refuges into the wider community who need ongoing support for sustainability.

**Goals and Outcomes**

EAST hopes to assist persons to achieve their personal goals by:

- \* Assisting Clients to apply for their Centrelink Entitlements/Payments in particular Age pensions.
- \* Assist clients in developing strong relationships with the Social Work Departments of hospitals and where necessary with the Health Consumers Council.
- \* Referrals to appropriate Services including Counselling Services
- \* Assist clients to access appropriate Education and Employment opportunities where possible

Other useful resources for women experiencing FDV are provided by ISHAR Multicultural Women's Health Centre and Multicultural Women's Advocacy Services (MWAS).

ISHAR's tel: [\(08\) 9345 5335](tel:0893455335) email: [info@ishar.org.au](mailto:info@ishar.org.au).  
MWAS tel: [\(08\) 9490 2258](tel:0894902258) email: [info@whws.org.au](mailto:info@whws.org.au)



# Pathway to Safety



## Western Australia's strategy to reduce family & Domestic Violence in 2020- 2030

The State Government today launched Path to Safety: Western Australia's Strategy to Reduce Family and Domestic Violence 2020 – 2030; a long-term vision for a Western Australia where all people live free from family and domestic violence.

The Strategy sets out a clear whole-of-government and community plan for reducing and responding to family and domestic violence over the next decade to 2030.

The framework for change has four focus areas:

- Work with Aboriginal people to strengthen Aboriginal family safety
- Act immediately to keep people safe and hold perpetrators to account
- Grow primary prevention to stop family and domestic violence
- Reform systems to prioritise safety, accountability and collaboration.

Three action plans will support the implementation of the Strategy over the next 10 years, with the First Action Plan 2020-2022 also launched alongside the strategy.

Ending family and domestic violence is everybody's business and the Strategy sets out the roadmap to achieve this outcome.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.communities.wa.gov.au/strategies/family-and-domestic-violence-reduction-strategy/>



# Gaslighting

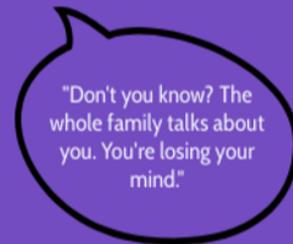
Targeted psychological abuse by manipulation in order to create doubt about a person's sanity or judgement

WOMEN'S DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HELPLINE: 1800 007 339



## Gaslighting

Gaslighting usually happens in relationships when there is a power dynamic. Gaslighters are self-absorbed and don't usually have time for, or interest in, others unless it serves their own purpose. They don't often display empathy and often manipulate others to serve their own goals. They often respond to criticism with anger; they are envious/jealous and highly critical of others. They use others for their personal gain.



## Getting **HELP**



1. Recognise you are a victim in your relationship.
2. Consult a professional (eg Psychologist, Counsellor, Women's Advocate, Doctor, Legal Council or Police).
3. Work with them to sift through fears, doubts, anxiety, etc.
4. Work towards creating a safe environment for you/your family.

WOMEN'S DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HELPLINE: 1800 007 339

## ARE YOU A VICTIM OF GASLIGHTING?

Are you always apologising to your partner?	Do you have trouble making simple decisions/ do you find it stressful?
Do you frequently make excuses for your partner's behaviour to family or friends?	Do you feel you can't do anything right?
Have you changed, eg were you more confident, fun, relaxed etc?	Do you often wonder if you are being too sensitive?
Do you wonder why you aren't as happy as you should be?	Have you started lying to avoid put downs or confrontation?

## Potential Warning Signs

They:

- Lie or deny even when there is proof.
- Use what is near and dear as ammunition, eg they attack your foundation as a person (kids, work, personality).
- Project issues onto others, eg often people who are unfaithful in a relationship accuse their partners of cheating.
- Attempt to align people against you, eg "They think you're useless too".
- Constantly question your actions and judgements.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/power-in-relationships/200905/are-you-being-gaslighted>  
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/j.2167-4086.2014.00124.x>

# MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES



# Coronavirus creates mental health "obstacle race for CaLD Communities



Sari Bui still remembers the day she had her first public anxiety attack.

"It was during the day, I was in the middle of shopping and suddenly my heart pounded so hard," she said. "It felt like I was about to die, it was a scary experience."

It was not the first time Ms Bui, a support worker in Melbourne, had experienced those uncomfortable physical symptoms, but she did not immediately recognise that they were connected to her mental health. Her anxiety was later diagnosed as being linked to hormonal changes caused by perimenopause.

"I learned that anxiety was not only in people's minds, but it also impacts physical conditions," Ms Bui said.

It's a realisation that many people have likely had this year, with the coronavirus pandemic leading to a spike in mental health issues across Australia.

But for people in culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, it can often be difficult to seek and receive the right treatment when problems arise.

## **The 'obstacle race' to accessing help**

Ms Bui said at the beginning of her treatment journey, she had to change psychologists several times before finding the right person. Born and raised Muslim in Indonesia, Ms Bui said some therapists didn't accommodate her Islamic values and rituals when planning her treatment.

"Australia has amazing services for mental health, what is lacking is just cultural understanding" she said.

Having a spiritual connection to her faith played a significant role in her healing, Ms Bui said, however she was annoyed when some people in her community suggested her illness was due to lack of connection with God.

"I've heard comments that I need to pray more or read the Koran more, but that's not enough," she said.

Bad advice and misunderstandings around mental health are common issues across society, but can be particularly difficult in CALD communities if information about the services available are not widely known.

Leanne Beagley, CEO of Mental Health Australia, told the ABC it was especially important to get the right messages about mental health out there now, given the additional stress coronavirus was putting on people.

This is especially the case for people who face language and cultural barriers when it comes to accessing help.

"There's this additional spike in problems that comes from the economic and financial issues, and from the isolation, and also from the racism," Dr Beagley said.

"These are all things that kind of add layers of complexity to accessing and seeking help that were already there for CALD communities.

"These are communities that have extra barriers, it's just like an obstacle race where you have to start another 50 metres back, and with more obstacles to get over."

Beyond Blue's lead clinical advisor Dr Grant Blashki said, in his capacity as a GP, some of his patients had experienced discrimination and xenophobia during the pandemic.

"We do know that racism and discrimination worsen mental health," he said. "I think COVID brings out the best and worst in people ... it's really time for communities to pull together and support each other."

### **'Many people don't know where to start'**

Leanne Beagley from Mental Health Australia said the first port of call for anyone seeking help with their mental health should be their GP, whether in person or via telehealth services.

"GPs are extremely well-attuned to some of the issues around language particularly, and the context someone's coming from," she said, adding that accredited interpreters are also available to doctors and patients.

Dr Beagley said specialised transcultural mental health services were also available in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland.

The Federal Government is spending \$3.5 million on mental health in CALD communities as part of its Mental Health and Wellbeing Pandemic Response Plan, which is intended to go towards providing culturally appropriate services and ensuring information is available in languages other than English.



"Dr Beagley said the additional funding was welcome, as long as it went towards addressing the barriers those communities were facing.

I think that's best done by working with the communities, it's about working with the leaders in those communities and the workers who are tuned into some of these issues, and helping them deal with some of the misconceptions about mental health," she said

Beyond Blue's Dr Blashki agreed GPs were a good first port of call, and encouraged people to seek a second opinion if their mental health provider wasn't attuned to their cultural background.

He said Beyond Blue worked with the Department of Human Services to translate information in 61 languages, and there was a 24/7 confidential coronavirus support line — 1800 512 348 — which linked to a translator interpreter service.

Despite living with the uncertainty brought about by the pandemic, Ms Bui said she now knows how to maintain her well-being due to her past experiences.

The former registered nurse said she was "open and very passionate" about discussing mental health with the Indonesian community in Melbourne, because she wanted to help others.

"It was a very awful feeling and I don't want people experiencing what I have been through," she said.

"When she shared her experience on Facebook, she said she was surprised to receive comments and messages from Indonesian community members saying they had also experienced anxiety.

"There were a couple of people who told me that their wives, husbands and kids had anxiety, even for months, but never talked about it," she said, adding that she thought mental illnesses should be treated the same as any other illness.

"Many people don't know where to start, so with more people talking about mental health, we can save many lives."

-Source: ABC News 24/07/2020  
To read the full article, please visit

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-07-24/australia-cald-obstacles-mental-health-care-coronavirus/12474932>

## Mental health and the NDIS

The Mental Health Commission in partnership with Multicultural Futures have support available for people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) backgrounds with a psychosocial disability to access the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

**Psychosocial disability** is a term used to describe a disability that may arise from a mental health issue.

Not everyone who has a mental health condition will have a psychosocial disability, but for people who do, it can be severe, longstanding and impact on their recovery. People with a disability as a result of their mental health condition may qualify for the NDIS.

If you, or someone you know, have a psychosocial disability and finding daily life difficult because of mental health, please contact Geoff, Multicultural Futures, to find out how you may be able to access NDIS.

Geoff can be contacted on [9336 8282](tel:93368282) or email [geoff@multiculturalfutures.org.au](mailto:geoff@multiculturalfutures.org.au)

The funded support is available until the end of September 2020.

To learn more about this scheme, please visit: <https://www.ndis.gov.au/understanding/how-ndis-works/mental-health-and-ndis#what-is-psychosocial-disability>



