

Project Report: Cultural Safety

November 2018

Muslim Communities Western Sydney



About Domestic Violence Service Management (DVSM)

DVSM is a registered charity which aims to prevent and to provide support for people escaping/experiencing Domestic and Family Violence (DFV), homelessness and other safety and wellbeing needs.

Our Vision

A world where women, families and communities live free from violence, have equal rights, opportunities, and the freedom to reach their potential.

Our Purpose

Building individual and community safety and wellbeing.

Our Values

Person Centred, Integrity, Excellence, Respect

Our Principles

- Violence is never acceptable or exclusive or excusable
- Our approach is person centred
- We uphold an individual's dignity
- Respect and equality is critical
- We are committed to the design and delivery of effective services
- We respond justly
- We collaborate
- We work with integrity, inclusivity and excellence
- We foster a supportive environment for staff wellbeing, development and succession
- It is necessary for all of us to take responsibility for making change happen.

A full description of our Values and Principles is available at www.dvnswsm.org.au

Cultural Safety Project

The **Cultural Safety Project with Muslim Communities in Western Sydney** has been designed and documented by Domestic Violence Service Management (DVSM). DVSM provides client services in an urban context (Inner Sydney), in a suburban context (Western Sydney) and in remote rural NSW (Wilcannia). DVSM also provides professional services (Sightlines) providing capacity building supports to corporates, institutes, organisations, services and communities.

We recognise the many years of important work already established and achieved through the NSW Women's Refuge Movement since 1974. We also recognise that there are many organisations working diligently and proactively to prevent, respond to and redress violence in society.

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Executive Summary

In 2017 Domestic Violence Service Management (DVSM), through its Sightlines Associate team, engaged with a variety of stakeholders, thought leaders and members of a diverse mix of Australian Muslim Communities, mostly from Western Sydney, to help identify their main concerns, views and perceptions of safety and wellbeing in the context of Domestic and Family Violence.

“Culture is the vehicle by which we have the ability to get to know each other and build vibrant and interesting relationships. The way we perceive and analyse people, resolve conflicts, form, sustain and end relationships, are all culturally influenced. Cultures of influence broadly include one’s place of birth, parental birthplace, ethnic heritage, religion/spirituality, level of religiosity, sexuality, gender as well as generation.” (Toohey, 2017)

This project report serves to say less ‘about’ communities and instead focus on our responsibility and opportunity as a service provider to better understand and respond more effectively in culturally safe ways.

Why have we selected a cultural focus to this work?

As a secular registered charity designed to serve all communities we increasingly recognise the privilege and responsibility we have to continuously listen to and improve our responses that serve communities in redressing Domestic and Family Violence. This work requires us to better understand ourselves, our defaults, assumptions and biases in order to engage with, listen to and learn from the people we are seeking to support.

“Culture affects the way people label illness, seek help, decide whether something is normal or abnormal. It underpins moral frameworks, supports identity formation, influences pathways towards resilience and fulfilment. Norms concerning emotional regulation in all cultures serve the purpose of maintaining social order by ensuring the engagement of culturally appropriate behaviour mediated by culturally appropriate emotional responding.” (Matsumoto & Juang 2013)

When we think about ‘seeking help’, what is it that we as a service provider need to understand more about, and respond differently to, as we support people experiencing Domestic and Family Violence?

In this project we conducted a series of 20 interviews with individuals and stakeholders, along with subsequent focus groups in Western Sydney to:

1. Explore responses to and ideas about DVSM’s Wellbeing Framework
2. Explore responses to and ideas about DVSM’s Concept of Safety Wheel
3. Ask about what else might be important to the participants sharing their experience and views.

“Dominant cultures often set and implement agendas and expect minorities, communities and individuals who chose different ways of being and doing things. Such disruptions can result in conflict or exclusion.” (McCashen, 2005)

Why is culture so important in DVSM's work?

Our own reflections about the paradigms we use for designing and delivering services must be reviewed, challenged and improved in order to best support communities. As an organisation we have been taking steps, through projects and discussions, to recognise our design and response assumptions. Being more self-aware is not something we can achieve alone, instead this awareness comes from reflection and feedback from others about how we are perceived and also experienced by individuals, families and communities.

“The stance we take in relation to others reflects choice. We can position ourselves in relation to others. We can position ourselves in ways that invite respect, curiosity and connection. We can also position ourselves in ways that invite judgement, disconnection and disapproval. The stance we take has profound effects on relationship and is shaped by our values.” (Madsen, 1999)

By increasing our self-awareness we might be better placed to engage in authentic, curious and respectful dialogue about what is working and what can be improved. The wisdom, experience and leadership of communities can challenge and inform how we design our service and the way we practice in delivering these services.

Throughout our work, much of what we do involves supporting the self-defined wellbeing needs, hopes and direction of people seeking our support. These individuals and families may weigh their wellbeing needs and desires using very different and/or contrasting priorities to dominant patterns. One example of this is the idea of family and family units versus individualism and constructs of independence.

“The cornerstone of intercultural connectedness, like the foundation of all solid relationships, is effective communication, but doing this requires that we improve the quality of the conversations we have about culture, cultural differences and similarities.” (Toohey, 2017)

As a result of this project DVSM is taking a stance to;

1. Apply the insight and ideas into our Wellbeing Framework
2. Apply the insight and ideas into our Concepts of Safety work
3. Invest in cross-organisational Cultural Safety Training
4. Seek out continued conversations with minority communities to understand how we are perceived, received and experienced over time, and how we can improve what we do to better serve communities
5. Seek out the support of others, including community leads, to develop our knowledge and skills in having conversations that involve perspective taking and advocacy and inquiry about community experience and community contexts



DVSM would like to acknowledge and thank the individuals and communities that contributed to this project and project report. The combined insights and wisdom of contributors has enriched our learning and informed our approach. This learning serves to strengthen awareness and responses to people experiencing Domestic and Family Violence across a range of communities.



**What did we do
and why?**

- Our approach to working with communities
- Project Methodology, Limitations and Questions
- Using an Asset-Based Approach

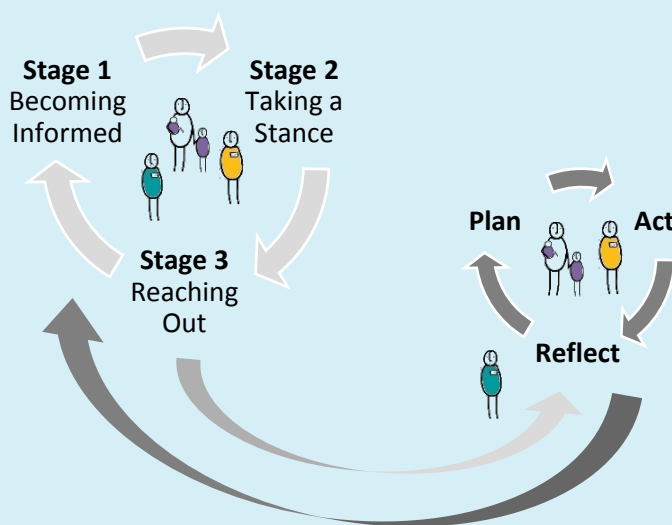
Our approach to working with communities

DVSM works to listen to and design with individuals and communities. We also work to listen to and build capacity within the systems, sectors (including government) and networks of social responders.

Our work can contribute as a catalyst for change, based on the belief that;

- Society holds the answers as well as the problem to Domestic and Family Violence.
- People experiencing Domestic and Family Violence may not engage with the service system, however all rely on many parts of society and the wider ecosystem.
- Every individual, group, organisation and community has the potential to play an important role in creating change within our society to redress violence.

DVSM uses a framework across services, projects and initiatives which offers a staged developmental approach. The stages are cyclical in order to continuously improve, and applied within an action learning approach.



This framework is informed by the work of Herring et al and Margot Rawsthorne at the University of Sydney.

Using this framework enables us to tune in to what is happening, understand what might be needed and to reflect on what role we do and could play in the process of change. The stages work at several levels - individual, practice and organisation - with each level influencing and being influenced by the other levels.

Stage 1: 'Becoming Informed'

Undertaking a self-assessment with openness about where we are at and what is needed.

Stage 2: 'Taking a Stance'

Being open and flexible in determining an organisational position and commitment to change.

Stage 3: 'Reaching Out'

Proactively working with others to achieve and share in the change process, which includes 'giving before receiving', taking a community development and action learning approach.

Project Methodology

A member of the Australian Muslim Community was selected to undertake this listening project within their capacity and role as a Sightlines Associate. It was agreed that the 'double bridge of trust' between DVSM and the Sightlines Associate, and the Sightlines Associate with the community, could allow for a higher level of engagement and cultural sensitivity within the exploratory discussion and process.

- **Stage 1:** The Sightlines Associate began this project by conducting a series of 20 interviews with individuals and stakeholders in Western Sydney to determine areas of need and focus.
- **Stage 2:** The narratives and themes of these initial interviews and primary discussions were shared with the DVSM Sightlines team and fellow associates. The interviews were analysed by the Sightlines Associate to develop a needs assessment.
- **Stage 3:** The findings of Stage 1 interviews combined with findings from the Stage 2 needs assessment were used to design and conduct a series of four focus groups (N1=15, N2=17, N3=31, N4=46) that included a diversity of Muslim Communities' members from variety of sects, races, ages, genders, identities and education levels.
- **Stage 4:** The findings from these focus groups became the foundation for a set of recommendations for DVSM.

These recommendations are outlined in this project summary to guide DVSM's next steps in the evolution of its understanding and implementation of more inclusive and safe service design and delivery.

Project Limitations

Interviewees were provided the opportunity to remain de-identified throughout, and at no times were the identities of individuals shared with DVSM. Whilst this has allowed the voice of participants to be heard and protected from unintentional consequences resulting from disclosure, the ability to report on this project is constrained and the findings have limitations. Some of these limitations include:

- The Sightlines Associate working on this project holds multiple roles in the community both formally and informally and this is recognised by DVSM as holding both positive and adverse value. The meaning and relevance of the Associates wider roles, profile, authority and influence in decisions and culture may have attracted some and deterred others from sharing their views.
- No community is homogenous and any representation of views in this project is not fully representative of all people identifying within the Muslim Community. Muslims do not subscribe to one doctrine nor live by one way of life. Differences in schools of thoughts, cultures and independent scholarship exist. This is important to appreciate and consider in any listening and design work.

Project Questions

Specifically the project seeks to hear people's perspectives on DVSM's understanding of:

- Domestic and Family Violence
- The concept of wellbeing
- The varied factors that can impact on a person's safety.

The project sought to hear from:

- People experiencing or who have experienced Domestic and Family Violence within Muslim Communities (this includes those who may or may not have accessed services)
- People within the community who are already responding to Domestic and Family Violence.

An Asset-Based approach

The method for this project was based on an ‘asset-based approach’ where the Sightlines Associate worked as a catalyst to engage the community to participate, facilitate discussions and present the findings in a summarised way.

Table 1 (below) shows the contrast of using this approach to the conventional problem-based approaches commonly used. Using an asset-based approach shifts the power from the researcher as an ‘expert’ to the community as leaders and drivers for ideas and understanding.

Table 1: Comparing a problem-based approach and the asset-based approach

PROBLEM-BASED APPROACH	ASSET-BASED APPROACH
Start with deficiencies/problems and needs in the community	Start with the strengths/assets in the community
Respond to problems	Identify opportunities and strengths/capacities
Provide services to program recipients	Invest in people as citizens
Emphasise the role of external agencies/experts	Emphasise the role of civil society/community
Focus on individuals	Focus on communities/neighbourhoods
See people as clients and customers receiving services	See people as citizen and co-producers with something to offer
Treat people as passive recipients	Help people to take control of their own lives
Fix people’s problems	Support people to develop their own potential
Implement program as the answer	See people as the answer

**Adapted from Foot, J. and Hopkins, T., 2010. A glass half-full: how an asset approach can improve community health and well-being. Great Britain Improvement and Development Agency. Improvement and Development Agency, 2010, p. 12.*

Asset-based approaches to community-based development projects are widely used in global and local settings and have operated in many countries around the world under a range of names. These include:

- Strengths Based Approaches (USA),
- Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (UK),
- Asset-building framework (Ford Foundation),
- Self-Reliance Movement (Tanzania, East Africa), and
- UN-HABITAT enabling approach (UN).

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What are your responses to and ideas about our Wellbeing Framework?

Although not all Muslim Communities are the same there are some core concepts of significance when thinking about responses to and ideas about DVSM's Wellbeing Framework.

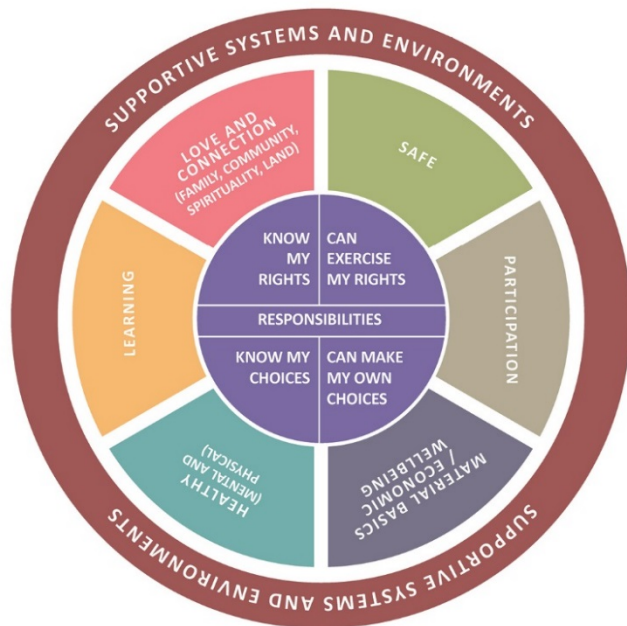
In particular discussions emerging in this project focused on:

- The concept and role of Family
- The role of Parents
- Overall responses to the Wellbeing Framework

What did we learn: Exploring responses to and ideas about DVSM's Wellbeing Framework

DVSM's Wellbeing Framework is outlined in DVSM's [Practice Framework](#)

Wellbeing matters to adults, children and young people and this includes their safety. Being 'safe' is more than being physically safe – it includes all aspects of wellbeing.



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DVSM defines wellbeing as being made up of interdependent areas each of which will look different in each person's life.

The value and weight of these will also change over time as a person's needs, priorities and circumstance change.

Rights, responsibility and choices

We work to support people's rights, responsibilities and choices, working with their capacity to act and make decisions – this can be described as a person's 'agency'.

When a person is aware of their rights they are able to make informed choices.

It is important to recognise that people's choices are not only informed by their rights but also by their responsibilities (which may be linked to their civil, cultural, family, community, spiritual connections including to land).

For a person experiencing DFV, the coercive control they are experiencing can limit and undermine their capacity to make choices, exercise their rights and fulfil their responsibilities.

Safety

Means feeling free from violence or the threat of it (violence could be psychological, verbal, physical, sexual, reproductive control, social, financial, property damage, stalking, image based or technological abuse).

Love and connection

Encompasses family relationships, friends and connections with community, spiritual connection and connections to land.

Learning

Is a continuous process throughout life. Elements of learning include the value of self-development for wellbeing.

Health

Includes physical health and nutrition, as well as mental health and self-esteem. Mental health is a key aspect of what it means to be healthy.

Material basics and economic wellbeing

Includes the provision of food, safe and adequate shelter, money and other basic human needs. Includes the economic resources the person has available to support not only their material living conditions, but the control over these resources and conditions.

Participation

Includes having opportunities to have a voice and be involved as a citizen and in the community.

Supportive systems and environments

Sitting across all areas, is the presence and provision of supportive systems and environments which support an individual's wellbeing.

Diversity of Australian Muslim Communities

Islam is described by some as a religion of diversity and variety of thoughts, cultures, norms and laws. It is also important to note that Islam has many sects with the biggest being Sunni and Shia, each with their own variations again. Some Islamic schools of thought have freedom of scholarships where interpretations of divine text and prophetic traditions are open to specialised scholars. Muslims follow which interpretation that they see relevant and most knowledgeable. This system has created a diversity of thoughts and interpretations of Islam that are different and adaptable.

Practice Point: It is important not to generalise or try to offer one solution to all.

Islam does not present itself merely as a faith but also a way of life.

Practice Point: It is important to understand Islam as a way of life in order to support a persons wellbeing and decision making.

Islam is a religion that gives a lot of consideration to local customs and culture. As a result, even Muslims who follow one common school of thought or one single scholar will lead a different life and apply the same principle differently.

Australian Muslims, like most Australians, also descend from many countries and cultures from around the world, including indigenous cultures. Although Islam promotes the idea of a single multicultural community, for practical reasons, Muslims are part of many communities bound by a common Islam.

It is also important to note here that Muslims are also prone to the influence of different ideologies that may sometimes be mixed with religion or culture. For example, political Islamists or socialist Muslims or capitalist Muslims, etc. This is to the extent where siblings from the same family could lead different lifestyles, yet live together under one family.

Practice Point: It is important to understand each persons application of Islam and their lived experiences will be different from another persons.

Why is the focus on the diversity of Muslim Communities so relevant to our question about DVSM's Wellbeing Framework?

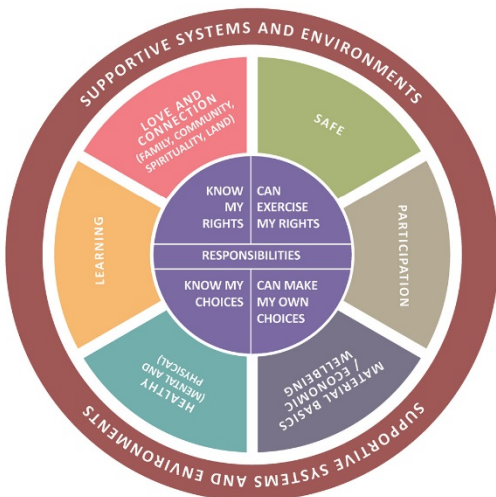
We intentionally developed the Wellbeing Framework in recognition that:

- Wellbeing matters to everyone
- The areas of wellbeing are interdependent.

We deliberately gave inclusive broad descriptions for each area in recognition that;

- Wellbeing is not something prescribed, assigned or weighted by organisations or institutions but by the person and within their context.
- Each of which will look different in each person's life.
- The value and weight of wellbeing areas will also change over time as a person's needs, priorities and circumstance change.

Using the Wellbeing Framework enables inclusivity and challenges us in our practice to remain open to the lead and priorities of each person we support.



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The concept and role of 'Family'

Societal and family issues lie at the core of any community. These issues become much more complicated when a collection of communities are involved. The individual members may have to assume various 'hats' at times and find themselves reacting to the same issue differently when multiple hats are worn. This is especially the case in individuals from cultural backgrounds that might understand and perceive Domestic and Family Violence differently. Culturally and linguistically diverse communities (CALD) within multicultural Australia bring strength, experience and wisdom that we can learn from and with to redress violence throughout Australia.

Differing perceptions are further complicated with variations within each cultural and/or faith group. A primary example of this variance is the attitude different cultures have towards their perception of the individual versus the family unit. While western culture emphasises the individual as the core of its focus and interventions; many eastern cultures view the concept of individualism as working against family harmony and undermining its importance.

Family in many non-dominant cultures is considered as the backbone of society and is considered to be the smallest unit. Therefore, the individual is always expected to sacrifice themselves for the protection of that unit at any cost. This notion even goes further to, actually, reject and blame any individual who might replace this embedded duty towards their family.

"In family and community systems, disrupting the system is to breach social and cultural schemas and scripts. Disrupting the system can also look like challenging powerful beliefs carried by the dominant group, which is akin to challenging orthodox ideas." (McCashen, 2005)

'Family' in Islamic tradition is considered the most important and most sacred educational, spiritual, social and economic institution in society. In its embrace, young people begin to learn the principles of life. It consists of a group of individuals with a sacred link: marriage, and as a result, life extends through the children who continue the journey of life.

Family is of three types for many Muslims:

1. Immediate family: Consisting of the two parents, siblings and children.
2. Extended family: Consisting of the broader immediate families. Grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins.
3. Tribe or clan: Consists of many families who are related by common ancestry. In Australia the notion of the tribe seems to have extended to also mean a group that consists of common ideology or common descending locality.

All these three types are important but their degree of involvement in intimate relationships, family disputes and bringing up of children vary. This variance is due to cultural norms as well as choices that families or individuals make as to how much involvement is accepted. Some may find stronger ties with tradition and extended family/tribe whilst others may value the independence of their immediate family and prefer to keep a distance. In short, there is no written rule neither a norm to this issue.

One important point here is that Islam encourages the nurturing of family ties and effectively suggests family involvement as intermediaries to solve issues among conflicting parties in family disputes. Participants shared that from their experience this can be an effective mechanism for not only conflict resolution but also empowerment of 'weaker' sides as they would have a stronger 'back' as expressed by the Arabic term.

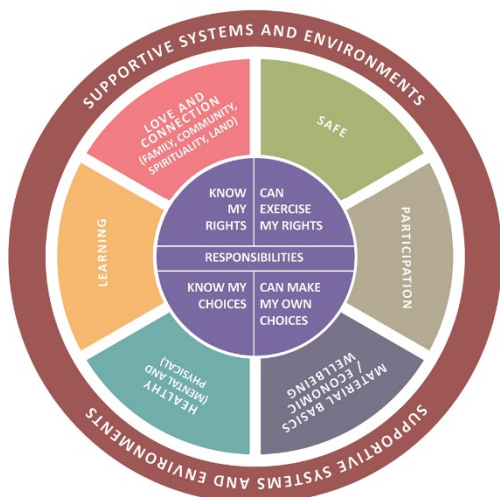
Why is the focus on family so relevant to our question about DVSM's Wellbeing Framework?

In the development of our Wellbeing Framework we intentionally (rather than unconsciously) centred individuals in the design. This has been deliberate in order to place attention on the human rights of individuals and their lived experience of violence irrespective of the weighting they place on family of origin, or current family circumstances or constructs of family they may choose to hold in the future.

The Wellbeing Framework is not designed to prescribe how much or in what way a person weighs each wellbeing domain. Instead it is designed to acknowledge the importance of each domain, shaped by the person and their context. Wellbeing relies on knowing about and being able to exercise rights and choices, as well as perceived, accepted or imposed expectations of family and culture, or the civil responsibilities that shape decisions and experiences within each of the wellbeing domains.

The individual themselves may view, retain or change where they weight family in their worldview, decisions and outlook.

We also understand that many people straddle the constructs and perspectives of more than one culture at a time and that perspectives can also change through generations and through experience.



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The role of Parents

Although not all Muslim Communities are the same there are some core concepts of significance when thinking about responses to and ideas about DVSM's Wellbeing Framework. These include;

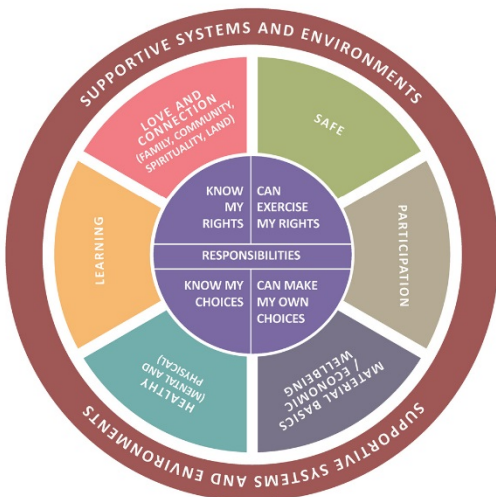
- The constructs and role of family is strongly emphasised both in text and practice.
- Parents as not only carers but also responsible guardians of the family. Parents always need to be respected and their instructions or guidance adhered to.
- Safeguards and rules regulating the amount of power parents have upon their children as well as the different family members' rights and responsibilities.
- Islam, as any other faith, is applied in real life where cultural opportunities, constraints are expressed and experienced in varied ways.
- Application of culture varies within local settings and contexts.
- Adaptations of culture can be influenced by either individuals/entities in power and/or as community evolution.
- Power balance in a family context can be centralised and accentuated to the elders of the extended family and to the parents/carers within a family unit.
- Father figures are often the centre of leadership of the family unit.
- Power variances based on both age and gender exist and continue throughout the levels of community and family.

Why is the focus on the role of parents so relevant to our question about DVSM's Wellbeing Framework?

Culture is not defined as a domain/area in the framework because culture is experienced and expressed through the whole of person across all domains.

We have included a domain called 'Love and Connection (family, community, spirituality and land). This is both reciprocal – to give and receive love and extends beyond interpersonal connections to other spiritual and cultural elements

Core to the Wellbeing Framework is rights, choices and responsibilities. 'Responsibilities' of parents and to parents (and/or elders) may directly and significantly influence how all parts of the wellbeing areas are understood, weighted and experienced.



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Overall responses to the Wellbeing Framework

The Wellbeing Framework was very well received by the Muslim participants interviewed. The following were the major findings:

- Muslims' are diverse and their issues are many so there should be care given to understanding their context at all stages.
- Service design should concentrate on aspects that lead to the most impact on the client.
- The Wellbeing Framework seems adaptable enough to create a formula for customising services to clients rather than the current widely existing top-down approach.
- The value of this model is in its unique ability to adapt to local settings as well as a variety of clients and users.
- Finance professionals saw that this framework is similar and can be informed by the Know-Your-Client Framework in financial services.
- Domestic violence service providers were very excited and commented that this framework clearly shows that "in order to understand the client, we need to know each of their wellbeing components which then informs our decision as to what service they should be referred".
- All believed that it needs to be trialled in the community.

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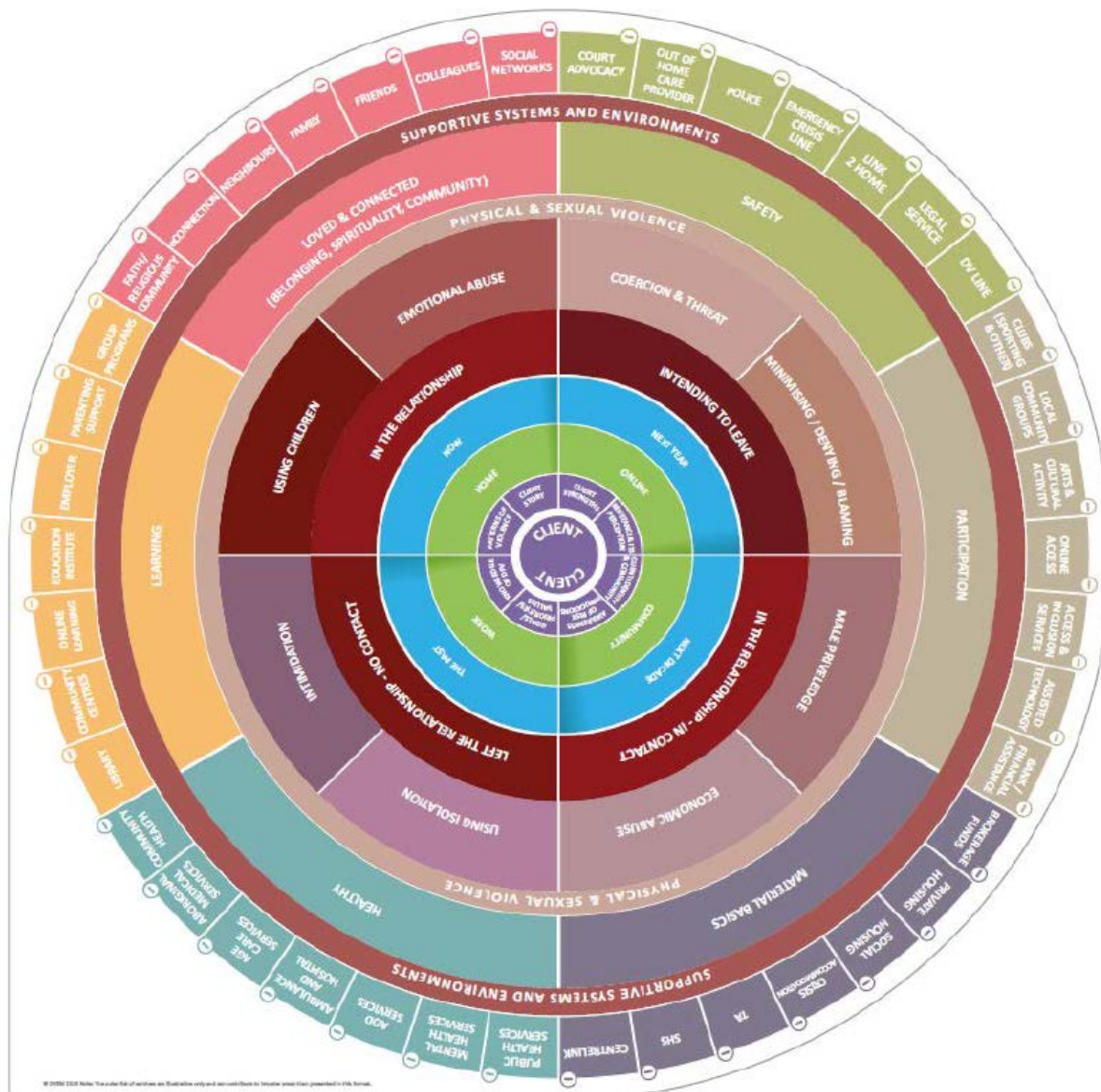
What are your responses to and ideas about our Concepts of Safety Wheel?

Although not all Muslim Communities are the same there are some core concepts of significance when thinking about responses to and ideas about DVSM's Concepts of Safety Wheel.

In particular discussions emerging in this project focused on each of the spheres in the wheel, identifying what resonated well, what could change or be added to improve the messages it holds and who can relate to it.

What are your responses to and ideas about our Concepts of Safety Wheel?

DVSM's Concepts of Safety Wheel interim version used with project discussions:



At the time of undertaking the Cultural Safety Project with Muslim Communities in Western Sydney, DVSM's Concepts of Safety Wheel had been formed but not finalised. The Cultural Safety Project sought views on how much the Concepts of Safety Wheel diagram resonated with participants and what might be missing or misplaced in how the image is presented.

The above image (used as final) is presented and explained more fully in the Concepts of Safety Project Report (May 2018) and the image has informed the graphics used in the prototype and first edition of Follow My Lead (July 2018).

What are your responses to and ideas about our Concepts of Safety Wheel?

Feedback on DVSMs Concept of Safety Wheel

The following table summarises the feedback and ideas from the participants engaged in the Cultural Safety Project.

DVSM's Concepts of Safety Wheel had been formed but not finalised, and the project sought views on how much the concepts resonated with participants and what might be missing or misplaced in how the image is presented.

Sphere in focus in the Concepts of Safety Wheel	Feedback from participants	Idea/s from participants for changes/improvements
Client the Person Inner Circle (Centre)	<p>It is very comprehensive and adaptable</p> <p>It focuses on the individual client, who is the actual focus in service delivery model but then in many Muslim Communities, family is sometimes viewed as more important than the individual.</p> <p>Some argued that it is already embedded in the community and/or priorities variables</p>	<p>Maybe Family Ties can be proposed as an extra variable added to cover this issue even more</p>

How has DVSM responded to this idea?

DVSM changed the Wellbeing Framework in the area called 'loved and connected' to 'love and connection' to more strongly represent the reciprocity of interpersonal relationships.

We have retained the term 'responsibility' in the centre of the wheel because peoples sense of responsibilities vary and this influences all the aspects in the areas/spheres.

The role of 'family' and 'responsibility to, from and of family' varies from person to person and community to community.

What are your responses to and ideas about our Concepts of Safety Wheel?

Sphere in focus in the Concepts of Safety Wheel	Feedback from participants	Idea/s from participants for changes/improvements
Identity and Community (2nd sphere from the centre)	<p>It is proposed that refugees have their own identity and are in a very vulnerable and traumatised situation at times.</p> <p>Another issue is new migrants which make a substantial percentage of Muslims in Australia. They are different to refugees but still feel quite isolated and sometimes unwelcomed due to the current climate.</p> <p>It is interesting to note that a middle aged man kept referring to Australia as “their country” so when I asked him: “why do you refer to it this way while you are already a citizen?” He replied: “In my culture I cannot impose myself on anybody so if they don’t want me why would I force them to?!”</p>	<p>Maybe refugees should be added as an extra variable.</p> <p>New migrants are proposed to be another variable added.</p>

How has DVSM responded to this idea?

Rather than create an identity for ‘refugees’ or ‘new migrants’ DVSM has strengthened the language used in the sphere about identity in acknowledgement that people have many identities, communities and networks that they identify with and that this changes, and the meaning can be different for each person.

We remain open to feedback about whether all the adjustments in the Concepts of Safety Wheel are inclusive and representative of the strengths, needs and struggles of refugees and migrants. In the development of the first edition of Follow My Lead which is an output of the DVSM Project on Concepts of Safety, we represent the refined Concepts of Safety Wheel. The first edition invites feedback from readers across contexts and communities to share what was useful and or can improve in the resource.

What are your responses to and ideas about our Concepts of Safety Wheel?

Sphere in focus in the Concepts of Safety Wheel	Feedback from participants	Idea/s from participants for changes/improvements
Place (3rd sphere from the centre)	<p>Well covered.</p> <p>School was also mentioned to differentiate it from community as the two are not mutually exclusive in Muslim Communities.</p> <p>Prison was mentioned as a possible addition.</p>	<p>Change: Make school distinct from community.</p> <p>Add: Prison as a context.</p>
Time (4th sphere from the centre)	<p>Well covered.</p> <p>Hereafter (the after life) was suggested due to its importance as a moral barrier for many Muslims. It also serves as a vision that they strive to achieve throughout their lives so can be a good mechanism to bring about a positive attitude and change.</p>	<p>Add: Hereafter (afterlife).</p>

How has DVSM responded to this idea?

Separated as distinct sections within the sphere named:

- School
- Community

The suggestion of 'prison' is a context we remain open to and with our prior project and current work on supporting women leaving correctional institutions we are mindful of the high number of women in prison who have themselves experienced Domestic and Family Violence.

DVSM will explore the benefits to and unintentional consequences of featuring prison as a distinct location outside of the umbrella of 'community'. We can explore this with people serving sentences, people who have served sentences and service responders supporting these groups.

Applied as distinct section within the sphere named:

- Afterlife (this has been selected as term to straddle a range of faiths/beliefs).

What are your responses to and ideas about our Concepts of Safety Wheel?

Sphere in focus in the Concepts of Safety Wheel	Feedback from participants	Idea/s from participants for changes/improvements
Relationship (5th sphere from the centre)	<p>It was well received.</p> <p>Due to unique circumstances there were two variables that are proposed;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intending to form a relationship: this is due to the many cultural barriers that many Muslims face before starting a relationship Forced into a relationship: arranged marriage is common for many reasons. 	<p>Add:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intending to form a relationship. Forced into relationship.

How has DVSM responded to this idea?

DVSM has included 'entering into a relationship' in the relationship sphere.

This acts as umbrella terms for varied descriptions and circumstances such as dating, arranged marriage, forced marriage.

DVSM is aware that recognition of forced marriage (what it is, how it occurs across all communities, and how to support and respond) is an area we need to better articulate and point to in our definition, support services and workforce development so that all staff are aware and response ready and have strong networks to specialised support services where relevant.

What are your responses to and ideas about our Concepts of Safety Wheel?

Sphere in focus in the Concepts of Safety Wheel	Feedback from participants	Idea/s from participants for changes/improvements
Power and Control (6th sphere from the centre)	<p>This was the biggest eye-catcher of the framework.</p> <p>It generated an interesting debate that resulted in the following suggestions.</p> <p>The psychological violence needs to be added to the outer wheel if it is included in the definition.</p> <p>A variable that needs to be added to reflect reality is using immediate or extended family.</p> <p>Public Shaming was suggested as a vital element used commonly by some abusing partners including spreading rumours.</p> <p>Using Faith/Religion is one that is very common in many abusive relationships, especially with the cultural divorce controlled by men</p> <p>Using Culture or Tradition. This is a variable that would be shared by many CALD communities as well as Indigenous population.</p>	<p>Add:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using Culture • Using Religion • Psychological Abuse • Using Family • Public Shaming.

How has DVSM responded to this idea?

The Concepts of Safety Wheel already included psychological abuse within the behaviours that constitute abuse.

Whilst we have not added distinct segments and naming for 'using culture', 'using religion', 'using family' and 'public shaming' these map into the segments already labelled in the wheel.

In the development of the first edition of Follow My Lead which is an output of the DVSM Project on Concepts of Safety, we more fully articulate these elements in the description.

The deliberate use of shaming and humiliation we are understanding more fully as we learn more about the role and significance of Social Responses. As we continue to learn more about upholding dignity, how people resist and respond to violence and how perpetrators of violence rely on the power or threat of humiliation we will articulate these more overtly in our materials.

What are your responses to and ideas about our Concepts of Safety Wheel?

Sphere in focus in the Concepts of Safety Wheel	Feedback from participants	Idea/s from participants for changes/improvements
Wellbeing (7th sphere from the centre)	<p>Everyone valued how the previous layers led to this comprehensive layer.</p> <p>Finance professionals suggested that a financial variable is added due to it being different to the Material Basics.</p> <p>Most participants agreed noting that dowry issues and the separation of what each partner owns are important in being inclusive and supportive to the victims.</p>	<p>Add:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financial.

How has DVSM responded to this idea?

DVSM has adjusted the Wellbeing Framework to extend the area described as 'material basics' to also include 'economic wellbeing'. This is important in better representing the duration and severity of how physical material basics as well as long term economic security and wellbeing are both important in understanding safety. 'Material basics and Economic Wellbeing' both have an influencing role in peoples resistance and responses to violence, their safety strategies and decision making.

What are your responses to and ideas about our Concepts of Safety Wheel?

Sphere in focus in the Concepts of Safety Wheel	Feedback from participants	Idea/s from participants for changes/improvements
Service Interventions (examples are lotted against the wellbeing domains) (8th sphere from the centre)	Everyone agreed that it is a comprehensive list with very interesting options that the community needs to be educated about.	Increase community awareness of these services/options.

How has DVSM responded to this idea?

DVSM remains committed to supporting informed choice which relies in part on awareness of what is available and also what to expect. The latter about 'what to expect' is more difficult and complex to map but is a level of transparent communication we are seeking to improve about our own services.

In relation to awareness of services that exist we have developed an online services directory that is grouped against the wellbeing domains so that people seeking support and/or supporting someone else can search for services through a focus or lens that is important to them – this might be health, safety, material basics and economic wellbeing etc.

Web analytics indicate increased use of this directory. The use of the directory is a population size higher than the number of unique individuals we support as a service provider so our early conclusion is that the services directory supports a broader reach than our direct provision.

The Service Directory is on our website

<http://www.dvnsdsm.org.au/support/additional-support/services-directory/>

What are your responses to and ideas about our Concepts of Safety Wheel?

Sphere in focus in the Concepts of Safety Wheel	Feedback from participants	Idea/s from participants for changes/improvements
Overall		<p>Convert Wellbeing Framework into an algorithm and an actual tool.</p> <p>Use by service providers to customise their service in order to be effective and efficient.</p> <p>Use by service in order to customise their service in order to be effective and efficient.</p> <p>Learn from other fields</p>

How has DVSM responded to this idea?

DVSM understands Domestic and Family Violence to be experienced uniquely, and is therefore not seeking to build or apply an algorithmic tool from these concepts. To take the ideas forward in a non-prescriptive and non-diagnostic way we have developed two key outputs within a suite of work to take these ideas forward at scale:

- DVSM's [Practitioner Toolkit](#) – This toolkit includes our Practice Framework which sets out 'how we do things around here' and underpins service delivery policies, practice guides and tools.
- The resource [Follow My Lead](#) is an output of the DVSM Project on Concepts of Safety, within which we represent the refined Concepts of Safety Wheel. The resource has been designed to support awareness and inform the responses of social and service responders.

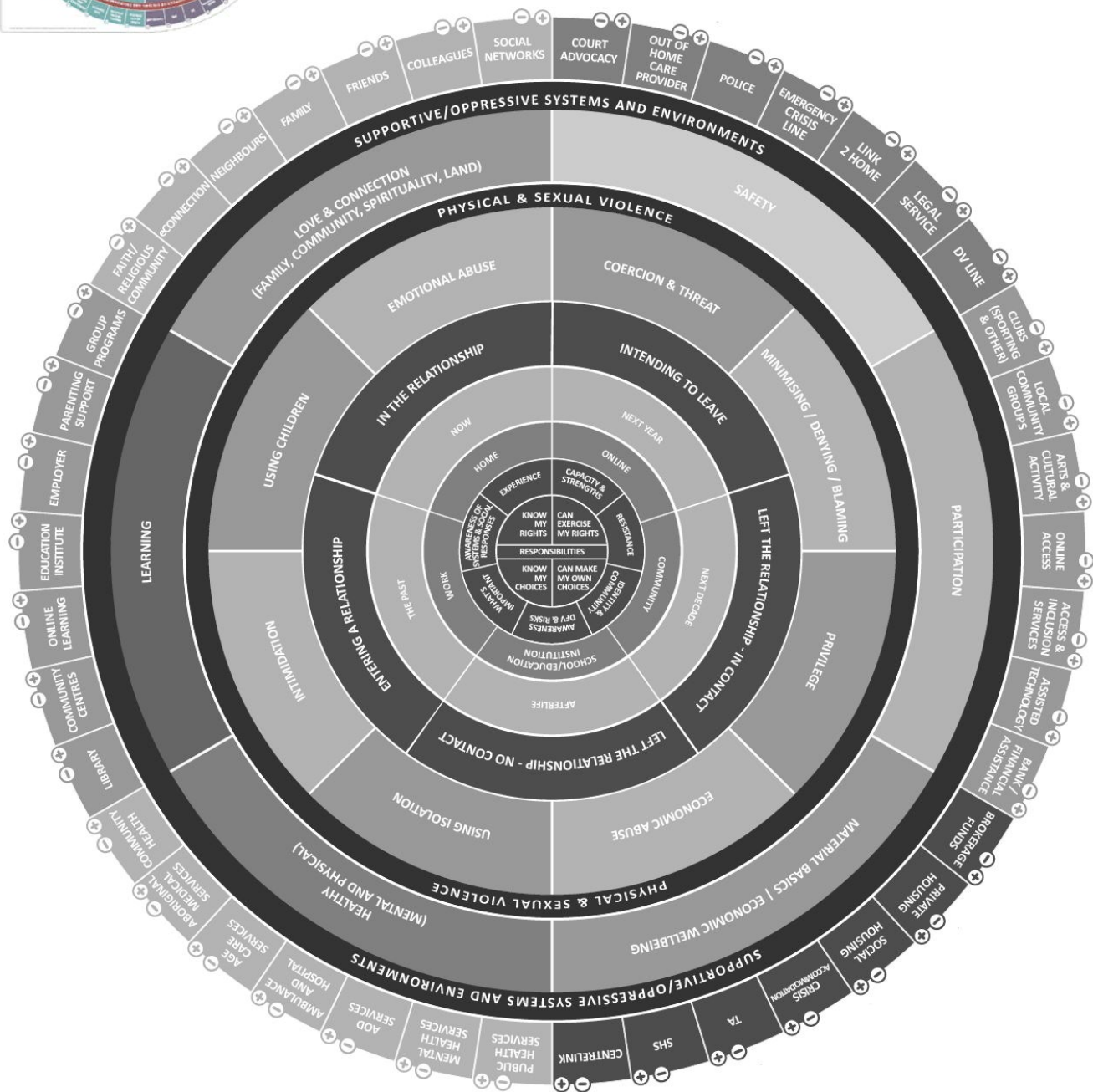
DVSM is working in a way to host these resources on our website to support the sector and broader contexts in taking forward these ideas without cost barriers, and with a clear transparency about their origin and intended purpose.

What are your responses to and ideas about our Concepts of Safety Wheel?



← Before (used in structured discussions)

↓ After (with changes applied)



3



What else might be important to you in your experience and views about DFV?

Although not all Muslim Communities are the same there are some core concepts of significance when thinking about lived experience of Domestic and Family Violence and views of Domestic and Family Violence.

In particular discussions emerging in this project focused on:

- Other Factors influencing Safety
- Support Seeking Strategies
- Barriers to Support Seeking
- Influence of Media on culture and violence
- Key Messages and Key Concerns

What else might be important to you in your experience and views about DFV?

The most important finding of this report is how unheard, neglected and accused project participants from Muslim Communities felt. There was a clear frustration to the extent of anger sometimes at the systems in place for three main reasons:

- 1. Feeling 'foreign' or 'other'**
- 2. Feeling 'guilty' or 'blamed'**
- 3. Feeling 'ignored' or 'unimportant'**

Project participants shared ideas about what other factors might influence a person's safety.

- The worldview of the person experiencing violence
- The partners' personality and perception of what constitutes abuse
- Religious and faith concepts that are important to a person and their decisions
- Communication and understanding from support services and social networks
- Transparency of services about what support is offered and what will happen
- Consistency and reliability of support services

Islamic Principles that can be exploited by perpetrators of Domestic and Family Violence

Islamic rulings differ between scholars based on their interpretations and real life factors they take into consideration.

There is an overarching Islamic principle promoting dialogue and mutual agreements at home between family members. For some this can result in exploitation of marriage and/or divorce rulings, and for others the marriage and/or divorce rulings can be used as a means of support.

For example:

- Divorce in Islam is primarily controlled by husband. Different Islamic sects have different restrictions though.
- A wife has no intrinsic right to divorce except if she has included it as an extra condition in the marriage contract.
- Females seeking divorce face lengthy process of mediation, usually family involvement and convincing of their husband to either correct his ways or divorce.
- Divorce is considered warranted for women in cases of either domestic violence or where a husband has neglected his duties. In these instances, an Islamic scholar may issue divorce without husband's will.
- A wife has sole right to the agreed dowry and can ask for it at any time or take it upon divorce.
- A wife takes nothing from her husband's wealth upon divorce except the agreed dowry and children's expense payments if they live with her.

Examples of strategies used

Some examples (not exhaustive) were described by project participants as strategies used by survivors to seek support and/or to manage safety.

Denial:

Project participants talked about support seeking strategies in the form of:

- Denying violence occurred if confronted or if asked.
- Denying Domestic and Family Violence exists in Muslim Communities and denial of the need for solutions.

Denial may be occurring because:

- Fears of increased violence as a result of disclosure.
- Dilemmas felt amongst some members of Muslim Communities who experience that society cares about ensuring the dignity and humanity of human beings but at the same time allows the violation of the dignity and humanity of Muslim Communities.
- Related fear that if a victim of Domestic and Family Violence speaks out, then it would be publicised as more ammunition against not only him/her but also the whole community that they care about.

Within the participant group a religious man said: “I feel if I reveal what happens within my house, as if I’m betraying the whole Islam as the media will use my case against my religion not my attacker”.

Address the problem within the extended family:

Project participants talked about support seeking strategies in the form of:

- Seeking family members to help them solve the problem, such as the husband's parents or family members.
- Seeking a person outside the family such as a friend, neighbour or any other person(s) with influence on the perpetrator.

Seeking religious advice and/or judgment:

Project participants talked about support seeking strategies in the form of:

- Many survivors contact their local religious clerks to seek advice, mediation or even judgment against their perpetrator.
- Some even go to recognised international Islamic bodies and authorities to interfere.

Use non-traditional solutions:

Project participants talked about support seeking strategies in the form of:

- Survivors may use non-traditional solutions, such as social institutions or centres that can offer support and protection.
- Sometimes, in very serious circumstances, victims contact Police directly to file a complaint.

Use superstitious solutions:

Project participants talked about support seeking strategies in the form of:

- Some survivors use superstitious means to solve their problems.

It is important to note that while the above five strategies are common, they may not be the only resolutions that people experiencing Domestic and Family Violence seek. Generally, it is understood that strategies used by victims depend on their degree of awareness of the violence to which they are exposed and the role they play in society.

Barriers to Support Seeking

Some further examples (not exhaustive) were described by project participants as to why people experiencing Domestic and Family Violence might not seek support:

- Spread of misinformation and unhealthy attitudes towards sexual orientation and gender identity and gender roles?
- Lack of understanding of what constitutes a healthy relationship
- Notion of modesty and belief in privacy
- People experiencing violence are afraid of breaking-up families or destroying reputation
- Public opinion and media attention are feared
- Many Muslim Communities are wary in a context of increasing Islamophobia
- People experiencing violence may be blamed for being assaulted
- Accusations from those within the community of being brain-washed by 'western' culture
- Conspiracy theories about external agencies exploiting Muslim Communities
- Some people experiencing violence are afraid that speaking up may expose them to risk of honour-killing
- Some people experiencing violence fear that lack of resources might leave them alone, especially females brought up to be dependant in most Muslim families
- Some people experiencing violence fear of not being able to marry again as their reputation would be permanently stained
- Most people experiencing violence fear losing their children to their husbands
- Most people experiencing violence fear losing their children to FACS (including the children losing their Islamic faith or culture)
- Some people experiencing violence on visas fear losing the opportunity to live in Australia
- Some people experiencing violence fear God's wrath if they break-up their families
- Some people experiencing violence of different sexual orientation to the expectations of their community, or engaged in relationships outside of marriage, etc. are afraid of being exposed and outed in public
- Not having the means necessary to leave home
- Some people experiencing violence are more afraid of services than they are of the violence
- Lack of ability to live independently or alone
- Fear that faith and/or culture may be blamed which oversimplifies a complex scenario
- Fear that seeking service may lead to increased violence.

Project participants perceptions about the Influence of Media on culture and violence

Muslim Communities are exposed to mainstream and traditional media:

1. Mainstream media consists of any media outlet being online, television, screened or printed and is generally western owned.
2. Traditional media consists of many Muslim Communities' media outlets either Australian or international in all types: internet, radio, television and cinema.

Project participants shared their views on these types of media:

Mainstream media promotion of violence is not limited to the news but many view it as an actual risk factor influencing not just Muslim children but all children and young people in society.

Participants shared concerns relating to areas such as:

- Exaggeration of the media in portraying violence as an exciting and acceptable behaviour.
- Promoting criminals as individuals who are performing heroic operations.
- Recurrence of violence in drama and media programs is dangerous and harmful, and in the long run it becomes an acceptable means for individuals to confront situations and conflicts, to imitate behaviour and spread crime.
- Muslims are mostly portrayed in an orientalist image as angry Arab men and veiled women who lead a primitive life. An image far from the truth on many levels.
- Muslims are portrayed in the media as violent and radical individuals.
- Muslim women are constantly shown as weak, domesticated and victimised.

Traditional media tries to compliment western mainstream media by either promoting the traditional identity or reflecting an alternative reality. It focuses on men and women as the basis of society in a traditional lens. It should be noted here that traditional media outlets are owned by various groups with conflicting agendas and not necessarily fit in one or even a number of categories.

Participants shared concerns about images from some traditional media relating to:

- The image of women is depicted as one complimentary to male partner or even inferior to him.
- The image of the man always appears, especially in traditional drama, in the form of power, control, physical strength and intelligence; while reflecting the image of women in the form of weakness, naivety and distance from rational thinking and behaviour.
- Some media, unfortunately, reveals content with extreme bias towards men in exchange for full condemnation of women. The man is portrayed as one that, in most cases, has been prey to the temptation of a woman.
- Some even go further to projecting the image of a deviant woman being someone who is a prostitute, gang member, sell-out spy and beggar.

Participants voiced the need to reduce and prevent children's exposure to online/digital violence. And also to build avenues of trust between Muslim Communities and the media that allows the community to share their perspectives without fear of misrepresentation or recrimination/

Key Concerns | Key Messages

Project participants from Muslim Communities shared the following feedback.

Overall concerns and messages relating to the following areas:

- Lack of universal definition of Domestic and Family Violence
- Communities are so diverse, so no one shoe fits all – this is important for service design
- Demand for support increases as knowledge of Domestic and Family Violence and support services increases
- Perception of mixed messages from support services about safety and support offer.

Ideas about what Domestic and Family Violence service providers should address:

- Building a bridge with the Muslim Communities
- Developing community informed policies and procedures
- Muslim Communities' unique experiences should be taken into consideration at all times
- Program and course development should involve direct input from the community
- Regular and reliable evaluations need to be in place
- Outreach services and resources should increase to reach those who cannot or would not go to or access a service.

Ideas about ways to ensure inclusiveness and safety in all related systems:

- Community is consulted in program and service design and development
- Meaningful community and religious engagement
- Diversifying workforce in support services
- Build the cultural safety and experience of workforce in support services.

Key Messages | Key Concerns

Project Participants described themes relating to immediate need for genuine inclusiveness in all aspects of the system. This includes:

- Cultural training of all professionals in the field
- Cultural awareness of authorities
- Political narratives about Muslim Communities has a significant role in community safety and wellbeing
- Diversify staff to include Muslims both in decision-making and everyday practice
- Engaging religious institutions and leaders in a genuine and mutual way
- Work with Islamic law and Muslim culture to find practical solutions
- Design services that are built around community's needs and cultural safety
- Provide specialised Muslim-oriented counselling services
- Train Muslim clerics in domestic violence and how to respond.



**What did/can we do
differently or next?**

1

Apply the insight and ideas into our Wellbeing Framework

Practice Point: It is important not to generalise or try to offer one solution to all.

Practice Point: It is important to understand Islam as a way of life in order to support a persons wellbeing and decision making.

Practice Point: It is important to understand that each persons application of Islam and their lived experiences will be different from another.

Practice Point: Continue to build understanding that many people straddle the constructs and perspectives of more than one culture at a time and that perspectives can also change through generations and through experience.

Continue to use the DVSM Wellbeing Framework to enable inclusivity and challenge us in our practice to remain open to the lead and priorities of each person we support.

Apply the insight and ideas into our Concepts of Safety work

Along with all the changes already applied into the Concepts of Safety Wheel listed within the body of this project report, there are a number of practice points for DVSM to explore and develop in moving ahead:

Practice Point: Continue to explore and deepen our understanding about the relationship between 'responsibility' and the wellbeing domains in particular Love and Connection. Recognising and supporting the responsibilities people have to and for others from their cultural values and context.

Practice Point: Remain open to feedback about whether all the adjustments in the Concepts of Safety Wheel are inclusive and representative of the strengths, needs and struggles of refugees and migrants. (In the development of the first edition of Follow My Lead which is an output of the DVSM Project on Concepts of Safety, we represent the refined concepts of safety wheel. The first edition invites feedback from readers across contexts and communities to share what was useful and or can improve in the resource).

Practice Point: DVSM will explore the benefits to and unintentional consequences of featuring prison as a distinct location outside of the umbrella of 'community'. We can explore this with people serving sentences, people who have served sentences and service responders supporting these groups.

2

3

Practice Point: DVSM is aware that recognition of forced marriage (what it is, how it occurs across all communities, and how to support and respond) is an area we need to better articulate and point to in our definition, support services and workforce development so that all staff are aware and response ready and have strong networks to specialised support services where relevant.

The deliberate use of shaming and humiliation we are understanding more fully as we learn more about the role and significance of Social Responses. As we continue to learn more about upholding dignity, how people resist and respond to violence and how perpetrators of violence rely on the power or threat of humiliation we will articulate these more overtly in our materials.

Practice Point: Support the sustained provision of the Service Directory and work toward clearer communication about ‘what to expect’.

DVSM is working to host resources such as Practitioners Toolkit and Follow My Lead on our website to support the sector and broader contexts in taking forward these ideas without cost barriers, and with transparency about their origin and intended purpose.

Invest in cross-organisational Cultural Safety Training

4

Seek out continued conversations with minority communities to understand how we are perceived, received and experienced over time, and how we can improve what we do to better serve communities

5

Seek out the support of others, including community leads, to develop our knowledge and skills in having conversations that involve perspective taking and advocacy and inquiry about community experience and community contexts

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“Why do we need to know about cultural differences and similarities?

People

Work differently than you
Think differently than you
Decide differently than you
Are motivated differently than you
Use time differently than you
Use appointments differently than you
May communicate differently than you
May resolve problems differently to you.

And you from them.”

(Toohey, 2017)



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