



MULTICULTURAL RESPONSE
TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE
WORKING GROUP

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Victims' Commissioner for Queensland
Office of the Victims' Commissioner

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Submission by:
The Multicultural Response to Sexual Violence Working Group (The Working Group)

Dear Victims' Commissioner,

The Multicultural Response to Sexual Violence Working Group (the Working Group) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Review of the Charter of Victims' Rights (Phase One).

The Working Group is a collective of professionals, advocates, and organisations with extensive experience supporting victim-survivors from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and non-English speaking background (NESB) communities across Queensland.

Our membership includes representatives from settlement and community organisations, family and domestic violence services, legal advocates, and sexual violence specialists. The 16 current members are: Brisbane Rape and Incest Survivors Support Centre (BRISSC), Zig Zag Young Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Service, Immigrant Women's Support Service (IWSS), Basic Rights Queensland, True Relationships and Reproductive Health, World Wellness Group, Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma (QPASTT), Multicultural Australia, Refugee Health Network Queensland, Community, Centre Against Sexual Violence (CASV), Settlement Services International (SSI), UQ Respect, Romero Centre, Women with Intellectual and Learning Disabilities (WWILD), and an individual CALD/NESB community leader.

This submission draws upon the Working Group's direct experiences supporting CALD/NESB victims of crime, insights from multiple community leader forums, and key outcomes from the *Multicultural Summit in Response to Sexual Violence (2024)*. It also expands on previous Working Group submissions and correspondence with the Queensland Victims' Commissioner, feedback and recommendations on the *Queensland Police Service Right of Review Policy*, and the submission to the *Commission of Inquiry into Queensland's Child Safety System*, among others.

Our aim is to ensure that CALD and NESB communities have equitable access to the rights and protections envisioned by the Charter.

1. Overarching Concerns

1.1 Limited Accessibility and Cultural Relevance

The current Charter, including the "Easy Read English" version, relies on generalised Western concepts such as *respect*, *fairness*, and *good manners*, without acknowledging how these values may differ across cultures. This approach risks alienating or confusing CALD/NESB victims.

While the Charter states that every victim should be treated with dignity and respect, its examples and tone reflect monocultural assumptions. Translation availability is limited, and the accompanying video lacks clear instructions for enabling translated subtitles.

We recommend the development of co-designed, multilingual, culturally adapted versions of the Charter, supported by focus group consultations to test the effectiveness and relevance of the language and concepts used.

1.2 Inadequate Engagement of CALD/NESB Communities in the Review Process

Access to the Charter Review process for NESB populations has been extremely limited. Information has not been translated or disseminated through multicultural networks, and consultation opportunities have not been tailored to the needs of people with limited English or technological access.

The Working Group emphasises that genuine consultation with CALD/NESB communities is vital to building trust and confidence in legal systems. Without inclusive engagement, the revised Charter risks reproducing the same exclusion it seeks to address.

1.3 Lack of Safety and Trust for CALD/NESB Communities

The current political and social climate is not safe for many CALD/NESB communities. Racism, negative media portrayals, and both overt and covert intimidation contribute to social marginalisation and fear. Under such conditions, many people are reluctant to report violence or participate in government consultations.

To build trust, the Victims' Commissioner must go beyond standard engagement methods to actively demonstrate cultural safety and protection for CALD/NESB participants. This includes:

- Disseminating and clarifying processes in community languages;
- Clearly outlining how information provided by CALD/NESB victims will be used and protected;
- Ensuring confidentiality and data safety; and
- Communicating through trusted community channels how feedback will shape future policies and decisions.

2. Response to Key Review Focus Areas

2.1 The Purpose and Scope of the Charter

The Charter's purpose should explicitly recognise cultural diversity as integral to victims' rights. Victims from CALD/NESB backgrounds should not be treated as a "special group" but as part of Queensland's diverse population entitled to equal protections and respect.

The Charter should affirm that cultural and linguistic safety is a core component of victim justice, not an optional addition.

The Working Group recommends embedding this commitment through:

- Culturally safe recruitment and service delivery;
- Mandatory cross-cultural and trauma-informed training for all staff;
- Adequate funding for professional interpreters; and
- Acknowledgement that culturally appropriate processes require time, which must be recognised and funded.

2.2 Accessibility and Awareness

Awareness of the Charter is extremely low among CALD/NESB communities. Many victims and community workers have never heard of it.

To improve accessibility, the review should:

- Conduct focus groups and disseminate information about the Charter in community languages;
- Translate the Charter into key languages;
- Create short, culturally relevant audio and video resources;
- Ensure all translations are reviewed by CALD/NESB focus groups for clarity and relevance;

- Partner with multicultural community organisations for education and dissemination;
- Ensure interpreters and bilingual advocates are available in all victim support services; and
- Include CALD/NESB-specific examples in public materials to demonstrate application.

2.3 Enforceability and Accountability

At present, victims' rights remain largely aspirational. CALD/NESB victims often lack the capacity or confidence to lodge complaints due to limited awareness, literacy barriers, or mistrust of institutions.

The Working Group recommends that the Charter establish:

- Clear accountability mechanisms requiring agencies to demonstrate compliance with Charter rights;
- Transparent, linguistically accessible, and trauma-informed complaints processes;
- The right for community advocates to lodge complaints on behalf of victims without fear of retaliation, particularly for those without permanent residency;
- Public reporting on CALD/NESB-related complaints and systemic improvements.

3. Key Barriers Identified Through Previous Submissions

3.1 Language and Legal Literacy

CALD/NESB victim-survivors face significant language and literacy barriers that prevent them from understanding court documents, correspondence, or procedures, thereby limiting their ability to exercise their rights or engage in justice processes.

3.2 Fear of Immigration Repercussions

Victims on temporary, student, or humanitarian visas often fear that reporting violence will endanger their visa status. The Code of Behaviour (Form 1444i) for asylum seekers heightens these fears by threatening visa cancellation for conduct unrelated to criminal law. This deters victims from reporting crimes or seeking help.

3.3 Lack of Cultural Safety within Support Services

Support services often lack the skills or training to provide culturally responsive and trauma-informed care. Without consistent cross-cultural training, systemic bias and misunderstanding persist, undermining CALD/NESB victims' rights.

The Working Group recommends that cultural and linguistic safety be embedded across service structures, not limited to individual staff with "special interests." Inclusive practice must be supported through recruitment, training, funding for interpreters, and organisational accountability mechanisms.

4. Recommendations

The Working Group recommends that the revised Charter of Victims' Rights:

1. **Embed cultural and linguistic safety as a guiding principle** of the Charter, applicable to all agencies and service providers.
2. **Mandate translation** of the Charter, complaints mechanisms, and feedback surveys into major community languages.
3. **Establish a CALD Victims Advisory Panel** to guide implementation and monitoring of the Charter.
4. **Require all victim-supporting agencies** to provide trauma-informed, cross-cultural training to staff and volunteers.
5. **Ensure data collection** includes disaggregated information on victims' language, ethnicity, and cultural background.
6. **Guarantee the use of professional interpreters** (not family members) in all interactions with victims.
7. **Promote outreach partnerships** with multicultural organisations for awareness campaigns and feedback loops.

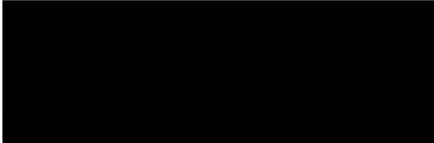
8. **Clarify complaint and redress mechanisms** in plain, translated language, and make them accessible online and offline.
9. **Develop a cultural safety audit tool** for agencies required to uphold Charter rights.
10. **Publish annual public reports** on how Charter rights are being implemented for CALD communities.

The Charter of Victims' Rights is a vital mechanism for ensuring fairness, dignity, and safety for all Queenslanders. For too long, CALD and NESB victims have remained invisible within justice and support systems due to language barriers, systemic exclusion, and cultural misunderstanding.

A revised Charter that is inclusive, accessible, and enforceable will not only fulfil legislative intent but will also strengthen trust between diverse communities and Queensland's justice system.

The Multicultural Response to Sexual Violence Working Group welcomes the opportunity to continue collaborating with the Office of the Victims' Commissioner to ensure that the new Charter meaningfully protects and promotes the rights of all victims and especially those whose voices have historically been marginalised.

Kind Regards,



Beata Ostapiej-Piatkowski

On Behalf of:
The Multicultural Response to Sexual Violence Working Group

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