

34TH
ANNUAL REPORT
2017



الجمعية الإسلامية للمرأة المسلمة

MUSLIM WOMEN ASSOCIATION

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About the Muslim Women Association	2
President's Welcome	4
CEO Report	5
The People of MWA	7
Service Delivery	9
Community Development	12
Community Engagement	19
Homelessness and Domestic Violence	22
Statistics	26
Financial Report	32

ABOUT THE MUSLIM WOMEN ASSOCIATION

The Muslim Women Association (MWA) has been supporting and advocating on behalf of all women and Muslim women in particular for over 30 years. At the heart of the MWA is a commitment to fairness, equality and justice in all our interactions and activities that support Muslim women.

The Association attaches significant value and importance to the role of women within the family and in society at large. This is a fundamental Islamic belief that is inherent in all Islamic beliefs and practices.

Our philosophy focuses on providing Muslim women with the full opportunities to enable them to develop as full individuals with rights and responsibilities as a member of society.

We believe that every woman has the right to access diverse services to enable them to contribute effectively within the family and the community. It is everybody's responsibility to ensure that women and other members of our community are provided with the means and ways of achieving these rights so that they can make the maximum contribution.

In order to fulfill our role of supporting, nurturing and responding to gaps in services delivery, we will continue to promote basic human rights and social justice through close partnerships as a way of remedy for addressing inequities and injustice.

The MWA is now recognised as the leading voice for Muslim women and is sought for advice and consultation at all levels of government on women's issues generally and specifically those matters impacting on Muslim women.

GOALS OF MWA

- To improve the level of access and equity participation of Muslim women into all facets of Australian life.
- To improve level of participation. The association will identify and respond to issues of concern preventing Muslim women participation.
- To improve the quality of service provision.
- To provide information, education and training on Islamic practices and beliefs with a view to correct misinformation and misconceptions about Muslim women.

We will achieve our goals by:

Working in partnership with all groups and service providers who are providing programs and services. These goals will be achieved through interactive liaison with management, staff, volunteers and relevant stakeholders / groups.

We strive to:

- Promote greater dialogue, social harmony and community relations with Australia's culturally and religiously diverse society.
- Promote sustainable outcomes through self-sufficiency, initiatives and income generating ventures.
- Continuously improve the quality and range of services.
- Respond to identified and emerging needs of our diverse clients.
- Highlight a positive image of Muslim women in all aspects of life.
- Increase opportunities that encourage greater involvement and participation.
- Increase knowledge and skills of Muslim women to enable them to achieve their full potential as individuals and as members of society.
- Ensure that the principles of social justice, access and equity and other government initiatives and programs reflect the specific needs and aspirations of Muslim women.
- Promote greater dialogue, social harmony and community relations with Australia's culturally and religiously diverse society.
- Promote sustainable outcomes through self-sufficiency, initiatives and income generating ventures.

VALUES AND PRINCIPLES OF MWA

The Association's philosophy is guided by the following values and principles that ensure our aims and objectives are achieved. All members of the management, staff and volunteers are committed to these values. They include:

- Responsiveness
- Timeliness
- Accountability
- Respect
- Co-operation
- Quality
- Access & Equity
- Safety
- Honesty & Integrity
- Creativity
- Personal Leadership

PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

Assalamu Alaykum Wa Rahmat Allah Wa Barakatuhu.

Peace and blessings to you.

It is with the grace of Allah (SWT) that the Muslim Women Association is able to celebrate its 34th Annual General Meeting. Whilst the organisation has continuously been evolving over the years, the last five years have been a time of rapid and intense growth, while continuing to be a lead voice of advocacy for women, families and children.

Over the last 12 months our staff have worked tirelessly at improving and strengthening the partner relationships of our Linking Hearts Multicultural Family Service and further streamlining and formalising our services for better service delivery, transparency and accountability. It is the pleasure and honour of MWA to not only be of service to women, children and families of the Islamic faith, but also to those belonging to all faiths and creeds under the all encompassing banner of humanity.

This year our organisation has been blessed with some very skilled and professional additions to the MWA team and we are proud of the integrity, professionalism and direction they have offered to our organisation and our services.

I'm unassumingly proud of the growth and progress of our humble organisation and the dedicated women who work on the front lines every day and those who work behind the scenes to ensure our women, families and community are looked after in the best and most professional way possible.

I'd like to extend a warm thank you to all our partners and to every staff and board member for their time and commitment to fulfilling their roles and responsibilities with sincerity and dedication.

We look forward to another year of professional growth, community service and the sisterhood this organisation provides to all who walk through our doors, with a focus on our purpose.

Sincere friendships and positive working relationships are an integral pillar at MWA and it's only befitting that I thank those who have walked with us for many years and those who we have come to know and respect in recent times. We look forward to continuing our journey with you with connected hearts in the years to come.

Joumana Harris
President

Assalamu Alaykum Wa Rahmat Allah Wa Barakatuhu.

Peace and blessings to you.

As I begin to read through the last twelve months of MWA's activities, I cannot help but feel pride with humility in reporting on the past year of achievements and challenges. This is a moment in time, where so much chaos and confusion surrounds our identity as Australian Muslim women, and we find ourselves driven by many factors beyond our control. As Chief Executive Officer of the Muslim Women Association, I am in awe of what this organisation has been able to achieve, despite the many obstacles along the way. It gives me great pleasure to report on another year of success for our leading organisation that has been delivering valuable services to diverse communities for over 34 years.

I feel extremely honoured to be leading this organisation, along with a great team of staff, management and volunteers, committed to justice, fairness with equality and quality service, that sometimes calls us to perform beyond what we think is in our capacity. Alhamdulillah (Praise be to God), it has been another busy, rewarding, challenging and inspiring year with the increased number of support services and activities responding to our clients' diverse needs.

There are many amazing new initiatives and ongoing programs and services managed, supported and facilitated by MWA.

Our Linking Hearts Multicultural Family Service continues to deliver holistic support services based on a holistic approach and focusing on prevention and early intervention, safe and supported crisis and transitional accommodation, rapid rehousing and intensive support for clients with complex needs. During this year, we completed the new Linking Hearts operational framework and training delivered to consortium staff members.

One of the highlights was the continuing collaboration with all levels of government, community organisations and groups. Participation in various networks have been an essential component of our work to discuss and share information, news and represent our clients' needs with others in the social and community services sector. We continue to represent MWA and Linking Hearts Multicultural Services at various forums.

This year our Linking Hearts program workers have noticed the increase in number of children of families who experience domestic and family violence. Recognising the ongoing and long standing impacts of health, development and wellbeing on those children and their families, we established a Panel of Psychologists to assist those families and children.

I represented MWA on the Settlement Services Advisory Council. I presented at the Social Cohesion Conference on the importance of social cohesion and the role women play and at Macquarie University Forum, which was organised by Macquarie University for the Bangladeshi Police Force on Community Engagement.

Our work continues to develop stronger partnerships, working in collaboration with organisations in states around Australia, sharing our skills, experiences and expertise of the last 30 yrs serving the Australian Muslim community. For the last three years, I have been traveling to Hobart, Tasmania working with Glenorchy Council and local multicultural organisations serving new emerging communities, organising and facilitating annual women only gatherings, providing refugee women with information to help them settle effectively in their new home. This year, through the "Hear Our Voices" women's summit, I was invited to assist and facilitate in the planning of an actual Muslim women's group, and having a safe space to discuss their multi-faceted issues.

I provided training to senior staff and management of Department of Human Services in Dubbo and greater NSW region and I gave a Keynote speech at the Muslim Legal Network Opening of Law Term Service at Gallipoli Mosque.

We continued to host overseas delegations, meeting with UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against women; and as part of the Australia-Indonesia Muslim Exchange Program we hosted a visit of Indonesian Delegation to MWA.

I have started consultations with women's organisations nationally about the establishment of an alliance of Muslim women to provide a co-ordinated platform to respond to key community issues.

We have farewelled some valued members of staff that we sincerely miss and wish them all the success in their future endeavours. We have also welcomed new staff who bring diverse levels of expertise to MWA's vision and mission in continuing to provide quality service with ethics and professionalism, with integrity making sure every person's dignity is held up in the most respected way, from the heart to the heart.

I would like to acknowledge the dedication and support of our Executive members of the MWA Management Committee who volunteer their support and experience to govern the organisation. My sincere appreciation to all our hard working staff, for their commitment and perseverance for their dedication to making sure our policies and processes are followed and implemented with clarity, which is central to the successful outcomes for our clients. In addition, the contribution of our volunteers, funders, supporters and community stakeholders is gratefully appreciated.

With renewed intentions and sincerity, we end another successful year of serving the community in its diversity. We hope together, we will continue to turn challenges into opportunities that are befitting of our values, vision and mission with quality initiatives meeting the needs and aspirations of our target group. We look forward to building stronger partnerships, as well as building capacity amongst younger emerging communities.

We look forward to another successful year and do hope you enjoy getting to know more about MWA's services, activities and programs through these pages. For all our updates, please feel free to check out our two websites www.mwa.org.au and www.linkinghearts.org.au

Maha Krayem Abdo OAM

Chief Executive Officer

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

President	Joumana Harris
Vice President	Nemat Kharboutli
Secretary	Shaza Rifi
Assistant Secretary	Dena Abdel-Fatah
Treasurer	Amna Elghoul
Assistant Treasurer	Rouba Allouche
Committee Member	Hannane Ramdani

STAFF

Chief Executive Officer	Maha Krayem Abdo OAM
Linking Hearts (LH) Manager	Feda Rifai
LH Policy and Project Officer	Amera Salah
LH Team Leader	Hiam Nahas
LH Case Worker	Rajya Arabi
LH Case Worker	Emily Moralli
LH Case Worker	Michelle Walker
LH Case Worker	Theresa Fischer
LH Case Worker	Michelle Wall
LH Support Worker	Ruth Talalelei
LH Support Worker	Nabeela Shameem
Communications Officer	Feda Abdo
Health and Wellbeing Officer	Samar Kanj
Office Manager	Nouha Marhaba
Lakemba Centre Manager	Wafa Zaim
Settlement Grants Program Officer	Loubna Hammoud

VOLUNTEERS AND OTHER PERSONNEL

Linking Hearts Volunteers

SAYIT Girls Youth Program

Student Placement

General

Arabic School

Halime Boztas

Waroud Dargham

Genan Dadoun

Iman Krayem

Samar Kanj

Sabah Kotb - Beverly Hills Girls High School

Mohamad Elshafai - ISRA/CSU

Ushna Bashir - UTS

Julia Wyatt - UTS

Shourouk Khater - NAVITAS

Suzan Redha

Thoria Allam

Sihana Hawari

Safa Borghol

Nazira Abdulfatah

Afaf Minkara

Hadil Alahmad

Nada ElJundi

Rana Abed

Lina Hijazi Kilani

Merfat Hamdouch

Mohamad Sabouni

Ghalia Almasri

Hyam Hamodeh

Sawsan Osman

Sihana Hawari

Suzan Redha

Randa Kanj

Hilda Hammoud

Nicole Leila Moore

SERVICE DELIVERY

This year the MWA has continued to serve the community with its excellent record in the areas of direct services. MWA's day to day direct services were very successful in achieving an increase in self-reliance and promoting participation in the wider community for Muslim women. This was achieved through casework, referrals, information sessions, support groups, community advocacy and consultation to address identified needs of education and training, family relationships and social support, legal and justice issues, employment, housing, health, life skills and social isolation.

The MWA has continued to provide social and educational activities, both from our Lakemba office and Felicity House in Bass Hill. These activities have been established and tailored to the needs of Muslim women. Classes aim to empower women, and increase access to further education and training in mainstream services, to help prepare women for work, and provide a comfortable, safe space for women.

Preparing for Work

A variety of technical classes have been provided from our Lakemba office in the past year. We know that computer skills are necessary for most workplaces today and so we have provided computer classes for learners so that a basic understanding of IT can be acquired through the Certificate 1 in Information, Digital Media and Technology. In addition, research has shown that there is a need in the Muslim community for trained child care workers and so we offer a Diploma in Children's Services. In terms of preparation for work we also offer English classes for new migrants through the Skills for Education and Employment course as Certificate 1 in Access to Work and Training. In order to further develop skills, the Certificate 3 in Business has been provided this year and has proven to be very successful. We have also continued to run courses on sewing and pattern making, floristry, and hairdressing which are very popular with women wanting to learn new skills.

Outreach Services

In partnership with Marrickville Legal Centre, MWA has been providing free legal aid services from our Lakemba office every fortnight. MWA has also partnered with PT Labs Consulting to engage a migration agent to provide direct services to our clients from our Lakemba office on a monthly basis. The program has received a number of referrals in the past year and there are many cases which we have been able to support by engaging clients in a variety of MWA programs.



Connection to Faith

Women are strengthened by their connection to faith and MWA is pleased to have continued providing this support from our Lakemba office and Felicity House. Weekly classes in Arabic and Quranic recitation have continued this year, with women increasing their fluency in Arabic with the aim of being able to read the Quran. We have also had weekly spiritual classes in English for women wanting to increase their knowledge about different aspects of Islam and be able to implement this knowledge in their lives. These classes are part of our mandate as a Muslim women's organisation to support the spiritual needs of our community.

Supporting New Arrivals

The Settlement Grants Program (SGP) aims to increase self-reliance and promote participation in the wider community for Muslim women who have been in Australia for 5 years or less. This has been achieved through the provision of casework services, referrals, information sessions, support groups, community advocacy and consultations to address settlement needs. During this period, MWA assisted over 180 clients from different cultural backgrounds with various issues such as Education, Financial Assistance, Accommodation, and Employment. It raised awareness and access to many relevant services, increased client's independence and participation in the community. Clients have gained life skills, secured affordable accommodation, improved Language Literacy skills, and accessed services such as Legal Aid, Centrelink, Health, Education, as well as participated in many social and educational activities. MWA also provided clients with Food Packages to assist them financially.

Casework

Client casework services have addressed many settlement needs of clients. It raised awareness and access to many relevant services, increased client independence and increased participation in the community. Clients have gained life skills, secured affordable accommodation, improved Language Literacy skills, and accessed services such as; Legal, Centrelink, Health, Education, as well as participated in many social and educational activities.

Information Sessions and Workshops

The provision of information sessions and workshops held throughout the year, on various topics have helped women to develop life skills, gain information on relevant services and increase access to mainstream services. Guest speakers are invited to share their expertise with clients. These include representatives from government departments, community organisations, and community leaders. Information sessions have been conducted in partnership with Legal Aid, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Department of Fair Trading, Arab Council Australia, South Western Sydney Local Health, Anglicare, PT Labs Consulting, and Centrelink.



The following sessions were conducted;

- Family law
- General legal advice and awareness
- Smart traveller
- Teach a learner driver
- Starting a small business
- Healthy eating
- Financial skills
- Migration issues

Educational and Recreational Activities

MWA holds a variety of educational and recreational activities for women throughout the year and they have always proven to be successful in providing soft entry points in engaging with the community. These include English classes, computer class, and other social and educational activities. These activities have reduced isolation and increased access to further education and training in mainstream and other relevant services. One of these programs is Go4Fun, a healthy kids program that teaches both parents and children to eat healthy and exercise for a better life. It also helps children to build their self-esteem and confidence. The session is divided into two hours, the first hour is a nutrition session where parents and children get information about healthy way of eating and the second hour is for children to do some activities and exercise and parents have their chat with the trainer.



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The MWA has become a place of safety, security and opportunity for many Muslim women. The array of programs provided by MWA have allowed many women to enhance their sense of self confidence and identity in an otherwise difficult climate. The organisation has worked on improving the level of access and equity participation of Muslim women into all facets of Australian life.

Capacity building and advocacy are a key goal of the MWA. This has been achieved in the past year through a variety of programs and initiatives provided by MWA. We have remained very active in advocacy, undertaking education programs for service and community organisations, as well as taking a pro-active response to major community concerns.

The Association has also worked to address issues of racial discrimination and vilification and helps Muslim women to address this issue through forums and education packages on women's rights.

By continuously listening to the voices of women and facilitating innovative pathways for them, the MWA is breaking down barriers to isolation, encouraging engagement and social inclusion as well as developing leadership. All programs are built on the principles of Multiculturalism and are open to Muslim women of all backgrounds and sects.

Through supporting, nurturing and representing Muslim women and their families, the MWA has been able to break down barriers to social isolation, improving the physical fitness of Muslim women and empowering them by giving them the tools and confidence to identify as Muslim women. This has resulted in building the resilience and empowerment of young Muslim women so that they have the capacity to contribute to the Australian community harmoniously.

Mothers Inspire Mothers | MIM

MIM (Mothers Inspire Mothers) began in 2012 and has proven to be a much needed initiative. MIM is a group for mothers, with the aim of enlightening, inspiring, and supporting Muslim mothers in a comfortable and relaxing environment.

MIM provides a chance for mothers to meet up and learn from each other and share each other's stories and experiences. MIM has provided an excellent support base for mothers facing everyday challenges and trying to balance out their various commitments and demands. MIM provides a reprieve from the pressures of motherhood and a much needed recharge to focus on the purpose and meaning of motherhood.





With a focus on personal and spiritual development, MIM examines a different topic each month, taking into consideration the Islamic, social and practical applications for mums.

MIM sessions are usually held at Felicity House, both indoors and outdoors, where there are some games and activities laid out for the children (play dough, colouring in, stickers, drawing) while the mothers sit around the room for the interactive discussion. For sessions that involve workshopping critical issues, MWA provides childminding for toddlers and pre-schoolers, while babies are welcome to remain with their mothers.

Some MIM sessions have also been held in the park, where the Mums have enjoyed a refreshing and rejuvenating walk in the park while they enjoyed pleasant company and inspiring discussion.

The topics of focus for the MIM monthly sessions vary and guest speakers are often asked to attend and facilitate discussion. Topics that have been covered in the past year include Motherhood and Spirituality in Ramadan; Resilience Workshop, provided by accredited trainers, combining theory, experiential learning, and practical skills to give Mums the tools for themselves and their children in articulating and diffusing conflict; Real Resilience: Lessons from the life of Khadijah, mother of the believers, bringing together the theory and practice on resilience in an Islamic context, drawing lessons from the epitome of the resilient Muslim woman, Khadijah bint Khuwaylid, wife of the Prophet Muhammad; Motherhood and Mindfulness; Self Care; in partnership with Muslim Aid Australia, a Love Food Hate Waste workshop was delivered, with a particular focus on being mindful of food in Ramadan; and the Heart and Soul of Motherhood.

MIM was also invited to extend the message of inspiring and supporting mothers to others within the community. This included the delivery of a specially designed workshop for the Arabic Australian Child Care Centre Parent Night in March on the topic of the meaning of parenting, the pressures of parenthood, and how to overcome them. MIM also provided a series of workshops to parents of Guildford Public School on the topic of motherhood and spirituality, as well as mindfulness for parents.

Saturday Afternoon Youth InTensive | SAYIT

MWA is committed to providing young Australian Muslim women of all backgrounds opportunities to being skilful leaders in their own respective communities. SAYIT is a leadership program that has been running for over seven years focusing on faith as a tool of empowerment, a platform for high achievement and a voice for social goodness. The SAYIT leadership program aims to develop an Islamic and social awareness amongst female youth in the Australian Muslim Community. We aim to engage with young girls by:

1. Providing a comfortable and safe space
2. Increasing awareness of their own identity
3. Inspiring meaningful contribution to society at all levels

The themes of identity, confidence and friendship building form an integral part of this program. We do this by personalising these themes allowing girls to share their experiences and voicing their opinions and ideas. In 2016 - 2017 SAYIT has supported over 200 young Muslim women through the variety of programs that have been provided.

The focus for SAYIT sessions in the last two terms of 2016 was on the theme "Rise Above It", problem solving and increasing awareness of our inner strengths to help face the various challenges of growing up. The SAYIT Girls also enjoyed a special Eid party with a private SAYIT girls only party with an afternoon of free swimming and food as well as individual gifts for each participant.

The first half of 2017 was on the theme "Let's Get Talking", which focused on discovering the power of effective communication. The girls explored the concept of self-talk, and connecting with Allah SWT as a means of navigating our way through life's challenges. We also looked at intentions for effective communication with others. MWA CEO Maha Abdo was invited to speak to the girls about her experiences in the community and supporting others. We also explored great contemporary women in Islam that have made significant contributions to their societies. We discussed all types of communication from written to oral and body language.

The main community project that the girls worked on were care packages for women and children facing homelessness and family difficulties that are supported by Linking Hearts Multicultural Family Support Service at MWA. The girls brought in a whole assortment of useful items including coloured pencils, notebooks, baby wipes, hairbrushes, tissues, hair ties, body wash, torches, candles, calculators, toothbrushes and toothpaste. The items were carefully chosen and put together in bags that were designed by the girls themselves with love and care. In addition, the girls wrote, designed, and made special messages and cards to go into their care packages for women and children facing homelessness and family difficulties. So much thought and care was going into these messages with the girls trying to ensure their messages of support and encouragement were being articulated through words, textures, as well as the visuals.

One of the highlights of SAYIT was the Mother Daughter Ramadan Iftar. The Iftar program was very light carrying a warm atmosphere as it was focused on providing a spiritually uplifting experience for the girls and their mothers.

SAYIT has also established a strong partnership with Netball NSW and Netball Australia in order to support and encourage the active participation of Muslim girls in sport and overcome the barriers that exist. SAYIT Coordinators were delighted to attend the Netball NSW Harmony Day event which began with an All Stars Netball match to celebrate the partnerships between Netball Australia and Netball NSW and their community partners including the MWA. The SAYIT program was specifically mentioned for its achievement having been nominated for the Australian Migration





and Settlement Awards. ONE Netball Ambassador Bec Bulley gave an address highlighting her Iftar visit last year at the SAYIT Iftar.

The SAYIT program has also been tailored to be presented to high schools in NSW. This included a day program delivered to high school girls in Years 7 to 11 at Australian International Academy, as well as a five-week program for Year 10 girls at Bankstown Girls High School exploring identity, emotions and problem solving using a similar approach to our usual SAYIT programs. The programs are designed for teenagers with opinions and concerns that need to be heard.

Overall, this year has had many great themes explored and challenged in the context of being young, Muslim and female. Creating a platform for young women to break down issues that relate to them in their daily lives and providing them with the skills for success.

Community Awareness Campaign with BreastScreen NSW

MWA is passionate about educating the community about appropriate health checks and lifesaving screens and CEO Maha Abdo was honoured to be a BreastScreen NSW Ambassador, urging women to look after their health by ensuring they get regular breast screens. MWA held community information sessions for women to dispel any hesitations and answer questions regarding breast screen and health checks. As a BreastScreen NSW Ambassador, Maha Abdo emphasised that women have a responsibility over their body, to ensure it is nurtured and nourished, and looked after. Maha acknowledged that many women are very hesitant about getting a mammogram but that the radiographers, all of whom are women, are very understanding and make the women feel very comfortable. BreastScreen NSW offers free mammograms in over 200 screening locations across NSW and MWA has assisted with arranging group bookings and accessing free interpreter services when the need has arisen.

Indonesian Delegation Visit to Australia

MWA hosted two separate group visits of an Indonesian Delegation as part of the Australia-Indonesia Muslim Exchange Program. The Australia-Indonesia Muslim Exchange Program (MEP) is an initiative of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Australia Indonesia Institute which aims to foster people-to-people links between Indonesia and Australia. Each year, since its inception in 2002, MEP has brought emerging Muslim leaders from both countries to the neighbouring nation for an intensive two week cultural and intellectual exchange. Visits include meetings with major religious organisations, universities, schools, community groups, government, and media. Discussions included an overview of MWA's broad community engagement and projects, and some of the similarities and differences between Indonesian and Australian Muslim issues.

Advocating for Children

A particular focus of MWA is ensuring that all voices are heard, including those of children, and allowing them to be catered for within a variety of programs. In partnership with the Bankstown Children and Families Hub, MWA provided a workshop on domestic violence and an information session regarding the various services provided at MWA and Linking Hearts. It was a very educational day for the local women where they had the opportunity to actively participate in the showcasing of MWA. Further to this, childcare and children's activities were provided in order to allow for the participation of all women. Activities such as face painting, story time and art and craft proved to be successful with all the children present. We also attended NAPCAN's Child Protection Week where there were a range of services in attendance to hear the talk about talking with children about violence, listening to them and hearing their voices.

Community Garden Project

The valYOUnature Community Garden is an initiative of Australian Muslim Youth Together (AMYT). Australian Muslim Youth Together (AMYT) was formed under MWA to build bridges specifically across the diverse groups of the Muslim community in an effort to create positive, enduring, community relationships resulting in an Australian Muslim community which is unified, respected and harmonious. valYOUnature Community Garden provides a platform for Muslims and non-Muslims alike to foster interaction, understanding and build social cohesion, as well as provide an organic supply of fruit and vegetables to individuals and families. valYOUnature has partnered with Sydenham Green Community Garden to assist in establishing a community garden on Council land. The site for the garden is known as Sydenham Green and is part of a wider regeneration of the areas by Council which will include a skate park and two basketball courts. Work on the garden is expected to commence in 2018 and will be a value resource for the local community.

Arabic School

The MWA Arabic School is one of the longest running Arabic schools in NSW and has been in operation since 1984 at Punchbowl Boys High School. It operates under the Community Languages School Program on Saturdays from 9.30am to 1.30pm for students between the ages of 3 and 16 years, and there are currently over 150 students enrolled. Our school aims to provide a holistic educational approach in which the mind, spirit and body of its students are developed to their full potential. Our objectives are to provide a range of activities and interactions which facilitate the healthy physical, social and emotional development of the students.





We provide opportunities for positive role modelling and support the meaningful contribution and participation of our students in different projects and activities. Teaching of Arabic language is a challenge to many of our students as they come from a non-Arabic background, but the commitment from our highly skilled, dedicated and well equipped teachers has helped the school to overcome these challenges and achieve great results. Our strategies have a strong emphasis on supporting the development of Arabic vocabularies and the ability to communicate in the language whilst maintaining a safe, happy and secure environment.

Moving Towards Middle Ground

Supporting local solutions-based project, Moving Towards Middle Ground is a project funded by Multicultural NSW under Community Partnership Action (COMPACT) program. This project brings young Australians together to promote positive behaviours and engage critically, creatively and constructively on local and global issues impacting on social cohesion and community harmony.

The project aims at building and maintaining strong, secure, responsive and aware community networks. The project Working Group has been set up to encourage collaboration between relevant community, non-government, youth, and educational organisations to build the capacity of Muslim youth to engage in dialogue on important social issues.

Community Harmony

A key goal of the MWA has been to reach out to other community groups to support them and work for community harmony. This year, as with every previous year, we participated in the NAIDOC Family Day, the Canterbury Bankstown Community Harmony Day, as well as held our own Harmony Day celebrations as MWA.

We also participated in the Cabramatta High School Harmony Day celebrations by addressing over 200 junior high school students at the Harmony Day Ceremony on the meaning and purpose of Harmony from an Islamic perspective. There were other faiths represented also.

As we are an active member of our local community our members enjoy participating in the various community celebrations that take place throughout the year celebrating our diverse culture, the family, our elderly citizens, or volunteer and community workers. This year we enjoyed and actively participated in the UTS Shopfront 20th Anniversary celebrations, Campsie Food Festival, Refugee Week Canterbury Bankstown Celebration, Greenacre Community Area Festival, Multicultural Eid Festival and Fair, and Bankstown-Lidcombe Hospital 20th Anniversary. We were also a partner organisation for the International Women’s Day @ Lakemba Community Markets.

We also participated in the Launch of Refugee Week at Liverpool Hospital, where MWA CEO Maha Abdo presented the keynote presentation on valuing refugees and their contribution to Australian society and launched Refugee Week.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Our organisation has continued to strengthen partnerships with local, state and national agencies to promote our service and develop protocols with identified service providers to enhance delivery of generalist services for Muslim women and their families. This is a critical part of our support and referrals and early intervention work.

White Ribbon

Standing up and speaking out against violence against women is the essential message of the White Ribbon campaign and MWA was pleased to be part of the new Advocate Program launch. MWA CEO was involved in the White Ribbon campaign video demonstrating men and women working together in the prevention of violence against women. Our organisation also participated in local White Ribbon events including the local Roselands Shopping Centre for White Ribbon Day as part of the Canterbury Domestic Violence Committee, Tug o' War Cup activities and Lakemba White Ribbon Day march and festivities. MWA also provided free training with the Canterbury Child and Family Interagency to playgroup facilitators and childcare workers on identifying domestic violence and how to respond.



In Consultation

A major component of our work is involvement with relevant agencies reviewing and evaluating services as well as planning for the future. The MWA is heavily involved in advocacy work on behalf of the Muslim women; we have also consulted on a number of issues that impact on Muslim women. Some of the consultations we have been involved in have included Foundation for Change with Homelessness NSW; a consultation with stake holders on trauma attachment and refugee families dynamics to develop resources to support families in cultural transition; and Australian responses to forced marriage, exploring gaps, challenges and options for change. Our CEO was on the panel of advisors for the Women World Changers Summit organised by the Growth Faculty.

The MWA takes part in forums as they foster and promote a greater dialogue between Muslim women and associated professionals. A forum allows for a wider advocacy platform promoting the needs of Muslim women. Shared knowledge and experience through a forum which can amount to greater education and progress. Some of the forums we have been involved in this year include Royal Commission Multicultural Forum; Exploring The Current Climate, Schools & Communities Forum; My Choice Matters for people with disability forum (NDIS); DV and child abuse interagency forum; and Working together against Domestic Violence and child abuse forum.





Representation

We represent the MWA on a variety of platforms including councils, reference groups, advisory groups as well as the media. This representation encourages social cohesion, strong team building and partnership. Media representation and visibility is particularly significant, and MWA CEO has represented MWA on various programs including ABC TV's The Drum, Channel Ten's The Project, Channel Seven's Sunrise, as well as ABC Radio Sydney, ABC Radio National, 2GB and 2UE.

Board representation is also a significant component of the work of MWA. It allows us to form appropriate committees for the purpose of general liaison work and community development in an effort to enhance better cooperation and coordinate with a view to improving better service delivery. These include the Department of Education Inner West Virtual Community of Practice Advisory Group, advising on issues relating to Transition to School, Early Childhood, increasing communication between parents and teachers; Department of Social Services Settlement Services Advisory Council; SWSD Homelessness District Implementation Group (HDIG); FACS Multicultural Affairs Advisory Group; NSW Forced Marriage Network; Canterbury Hospitals Communities and Consumer Participation Network; It's Time to Talk Committee; Domestic Violence NSW; and Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia.

Supporting Students

Throughout the year MWA has received many requests to support students from various institutions. This has included assisting HSC students regrading various topics in relation to Islam for their Society and Culture Personal Interest Project via interviews and support. We were again invited to present at Pymble Ladies' College for Year 10 Geography Women of the World (WOW) Day to over 100 students, on MWA and Muslim women, which resulted in great questions and discussion, as well as a few Muslim and CALD girls expressing their joy at feeling included.

Tertiary students in undergraduate as well as post graduate levels have also been supported by MWA through interviews, consultations, focus groups, and surveys. This has included students from University of Technology Sydney, Western Sydney University, University of Sydney, Queensland University of Technology, Griffith University and Charles Sturt University. MWA has also supported both local and international students in this capacity.





HOMELESSNESS AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Linking Hearts

Linking Hearts, officially known as Canterbury Bankstown Multicultural Homelessness and Domestic Violence Support Service, is the primary provider of CALD specific services for families, including men, women and children in relation to homelessness and DV support in the Sydney region.

Linking Hearts is a program funded under the Specialist Homelessness Services of the NSW Department of Family and Community Services to provide families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds with safe and supported crisis and transitional accommodation.

The Linking Hearts model was developed in order to get the best outcomes for our clients. The MWA and many of the domestic and family violence specialists in the Canterbury Bankstown region consulted with Police, Housing, and community groups in order to establish the best possible model. It was identified that the most effective way to prevent violence against women and children is to work together and be respectful and celebrate our differences and diversity in our communities. MWA, as the lead agency with over 30 years of experience supporting women, identified four main partners with which to work together to implement this collaborative approach.

Linking Hearts brings a range of expert service providers together to deliver holistic support options focusing on prevention and early intervention, safe and supported crisis and transitional accommodation, rapid rehousing and intensive support for clients with complex needs.

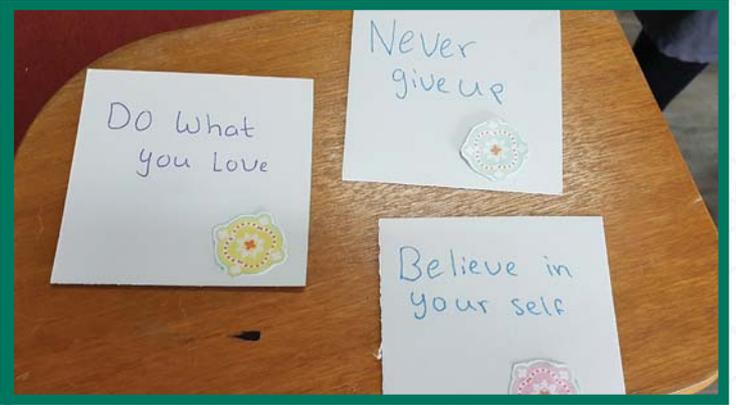
Linking Hearts supports families in need of any race, religion or culture and in ways that are cognisant of the specific cultural needs of our clients.

The partnership model that underpins Linking Hearts allows all members of a family in need to receive the appropriate support at an individual level while still maintaining a holistic support plan for the family unit itself.

Lead by MWA, Linking Hearts has four key partners:

- BaptistCare NSW and ACT | support our male clients
- Southern Sydney Women's Therapy Centre | support our female clients
- Metro Assist | tenancy support
- Domestic Violence Service Management | ongoing evaluation and process improvement





Accommodation provided by Linking Hearts is either crisis or transitional, depending on the circumstances of the client/s. There are two crisis accommodation properties: 1. The existing crisis accommodation centre that has been run by MWA for over 25 years in the Bankstown LGA. 2. A new crisis accommodation centre being established in the Canterbury LGA.

In regards to housing transitional accommodation, Linking Hearts has access to over 30 properties across the Canterbury and Bankstown LGAs. MWA provides both client and property management support for a number of these properties. For other properties MWA provides client support services only. Property management support for these properties is provided by a number of specialist housing providers including:

- Ecclesia Housing
- Evolve Housing
- Mission Australia Housing

MWA is a leading agency in identifying and supporting the needs of families who are at imminent risk of homelessness as well as those in crisis going through independent living as a family with complex issues. MWA is supporting the family with early intervention and prevention measures. MWA is becoming a stronger organisation and will continue to becoming a stronger voice in the domestic violence and homelessness sector.

Psychologist Panel Advisory Committee

The purpose of the Psychologist Panel Advisory Committee is to make recommendations to Muslim Women Association management regarding the health and wellbeing of clients. This committee has been convened as part of Muslim Women Association and Linking Hearts ongoing commitment to provide holistic care to clients and staff, as per the recommendations of recent policy on Domestic and Family Violence outlining service delivery involving a networked and co-ordinated system of police, justice, healthcare and housing, family support services and counselling that form a complete wrap around service.



Emergency Relief

The MWA provides Emergency Relief (ER) support to people in financial need to help them alleviate their financial crisis. The ER service has supported a various number of clients from different ethnicities and religious backgrounds, including newly arrived migrants who are on a low or no income and experiencing financial hardships as a result of unforeseen or life changing incidents, such as illness or family violence.

MWA understands that sometimes it is not very easy to put yourself out there and ask for financial assistance. Clients are treated with respect and made to feel as comfortable as possible, and are interviewed in a private room. The ER service is offered to clients through pre-arranged appointment times.

To assist our clients, we build strong networks within their local communities to assist individuals to minimise potential dependence on assistance. For example, clients who present more often for financial support are referred to financial counselling services. Financial Counsellors assist them with budgeting services, including regular income and expenditure, assets and liabilities, advise and assist with problems related to debt and debt enforcement and advocate and negotiate with banks and other lenders.

Help is provided to presenting clients in a variety of forms. These include food parcels and food vouchers, utility bills assistance (gas and electricity), and chemist bills. Our statistics demonstrate that ER was provided to clients from a variety of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds.



Celebrating Mothers

Linking Hearts sees many people come through the service, and a distinguishing factor of all families, is the role that the mother provides in guiding herself and her family towards support, strength and empowerment.

For this reason, and due to the endless strength of the resilient women that come through the Linking Hearts service, the Linking Hearts team hosted a morning tea that would truly celebrate them, their efforts, their struggles, as well as their achievements, and how far they have come in all aspects of their lives.

The Morning Tea was enjoyed by over 40 women and children, all of whom are at different stages of life. There were women who had only been with Linking Hearts for a few days, having escaped violent relationships, and seeking safety and support with Linking Hearts. And there were women who had been with Linking Hearts for over two years, who are now confident in who they are and the direction that their life is headed. It was these women, who can now acknowledge the pain they have gone through and the strength that they have, who were able to provide inspiration and encouragement to the women who are just starting to come out of the depths of pain, confusion, and struggle.



The morning was made up of a few presentations aimed at acknowledging the strength and resilience of all the women present. The women were also honoured to meet and interact with Sophie Cotsis, Member for Canterbury, who spoke words of strength and appreciation.

The women were gifted with a number of carefully chosen items as a gesture of appreciation and acknowledgement. These included special care packages that had been put together by MWA's SAYIT Girls Youth Group, where girls aged between 6 and 16 years old spent a whole term, designing bags, making special items, collating useful products, and designing and writing their own cards, to be presented to women and children who were facing or had faced adversity due to domestic violence and/or homelessness.



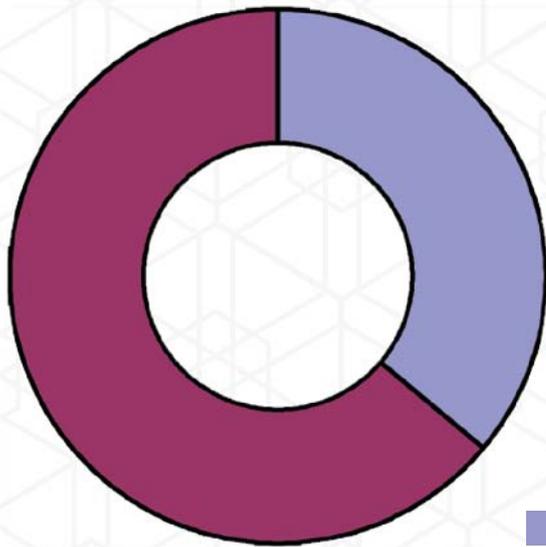
The cards brought smiles as well as tears to the faces of the women, with messages like “life needs you”, “just have faith in yourself”, and “you are special” being lifted off the pages as the women read them through tears in their eyes and smiles shining on their faces.

The women were also gifted with an individual red rose enveloped in black paper, and as one of the women put it, these roses represented the light blooming from the darkness. The women reflected on how the roses signified the darkness of the life that they were in but how now they were headed towards a beautiful bright future. The roses were kindly donated by Michael Lavilles, CEO of Beyond Travel in Surry Hills, who wanted to extend a gesture of appreciation to some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

It was truly a morning of love, appreciation, kindness and strength as these resilient women gathered to be themselves without fear, and acknowledge the inner strength that they have displayed. All of the Linking Hearts team were left inspired by these women and motivated to continue supporting the people in the community with respect, love, and compassion.



Linking Hearts Statistics July 2016 - June 2017

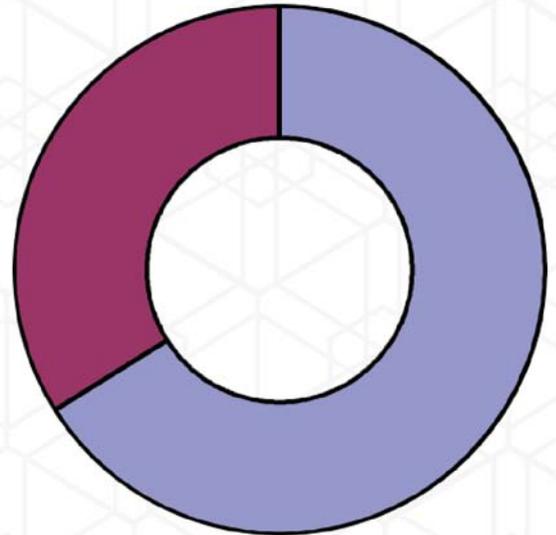


■ Male
■ Female

Total Number of Clients: 1248

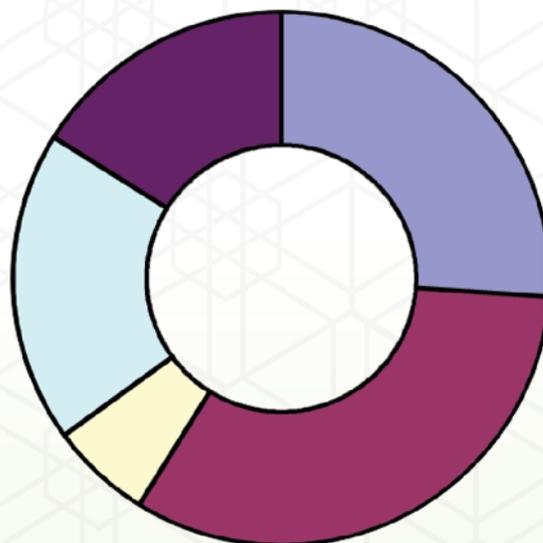
Male	386	36%
Female	683	64%

■ Born in Australia
■ Born Overseas



Number of Distinct Clients by Country of Birth: 57 countries

Born in Australia:	66%
Born overseas:	34%



■ 0-5 years
■ 6-17 years
■ 18-24 years
■ 25-39 years
■ 40+ years

Number of Distinct Clients by Age Group

0 - 5 years	26%
6 - 17 years	33%
18 - 24 years	6%
25 - 39 years	19%
40+ years	16%

**Location client resided week before period of support:
136 Suburbs, 40% from Canterbury – Bankstown area.
Source of Referral**

Specialist Homelessness Agency/outreach worker and Telephone/crisis referral agency: 43%

Other agency (government or non-government) : 33%

Other include: Centrelink or employment service case worker, Child protection agency, Family and child support agency, Hospital, Adult correctional facility, Legal unit (including legal aid), School/other education institution, Police, Courts, Immigration department or asylum seeker/refugee support service)

Family and/or friends: 24%

Living arrangements:

One parent with child(ren) 23.40% Living with other families 66.30%

MAIN REASONS FOR SEEKING ASSISTANCE		
Housing crisis (e.g. eviction)	328	30.00%
Domestic and family violence	317	29.00%
Relationship/family breakdown	223	20.40%
<p>Others: 226 (20.6%) Financial difficulties Housing affordability stress Housing crisis (e.g. eviction) Inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions Previous accommodation ended Time out from family/other situation Relationship/family breakdown Sexual abuse Domestic and family violence Non-family violence Mental health issues Medical issues Problematic drug or substance use Problematic alcohol use Employment difficulties Unemployment Problematic gambling Transition from custodial arrangements Transition from foster care and child safety residential placements Transition from other care arrangements Discrimination including racial and sexual Itinerant Unable to return home due to environmental reasons Disengagement with school or other education and training Lack of family and/or community support</p> <p>Total period of support: 1094</p>		

Table: Time since last permanent address

	Frequency	%
Less than 1 week ago	371	33.90%
1 week to 1 month ago	308	28.20%
More than 1 month, to 6 months ago	106	9.70%
More than 6 months, to 1 year ago	64	5.90%
More than 1 year, to 5 years ago	57	5.20%
More than 5 years ago	13	1.20%
Don't know	9	0.80%
Not applicable	166	15.20%
Total	1094	100%

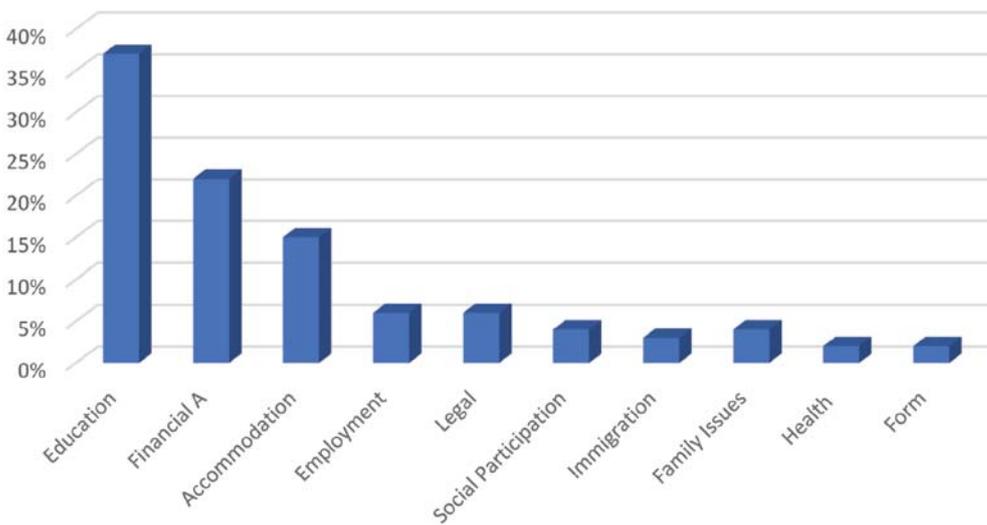
Table: Needs Identified, Services Provided and Referrals Arranged - services counted once per support period

Services	Needs Identified		Support Provided		Referral Arranged	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Short term or emergency accommodation	163	1.20%	150	1.20%	2	0.40%
Medium term/transitional housing	320	2.40%	295	2.30%	24	4.20%
Long term housing	64	0.50%	43	0.30%	0	0.00%
Assistance to sustain tenancy or prevent tenancy failure or eviction	122	0.90%	122	0.90%	11	1.90%
Assertive outreach for rough sleepers	924	7.00%	924	7.20%	0	0.00%
Assistance to obtain/maintain government allowance	410	3.10%	407	3.10%	29	5.10%
Employment assistance	68	0.50%	68	0.50%	0	0.00%
Training assistance	82	0.60%	82	0.60%	0	0.00%
Educational assistance	179	1.40%	179	1.40%	13	2.30%
Financial information	613	4.70%	613	4.70%	11	1.90%
Material aid/brokerage	405	3.10%	401	3.10%	35	6.10%
Assistance for incest/sexual assault	28	0.20%	28	0.20%	0	0.00%
Assistance for domestic/family violence	457	3.50%	457	3.50%	0	0.00%
Family/relationship assistance	701	5.30%	699	5.40%	0	0.00%
Assistance for trauma	39	0.30%	39	0.30%	0	0.00%
Assistance with challenging social/behavioural problems	93	0.70%	91	0.70%	2	0.40%
Living skills/personal development	796	6.10%	796	6.20%	4	0.70%
Legal information	236	1.80%	236	1.80%	32	5.60%
Court support	47	0.40%	47	0.40%	0	0.00%
Advice/information	1078	8.20%	1078	8.30%	8	1.40%
Retrieval/storage/removal of personal belongings	303	2.30%	303	2.30%	5	0.90%
Advocacy/liaison on behalf of client	890	6.80%	890	6.90%	3	0.50%
School liaison	154	1.20%	152	1.20%	5	0.90%
Child care	65	0.50%	65	0.50%	2	0.40%
Structured play/skills development	74	0.60%	74	0.60%	2	0.40%
Child contact and residence arrangements	30	0.20%	30	0.20%	0	0.00%
Meals	216	1.60%	214	1.70%	2	0.40%
Laundry/shower facilities	502	3.80%	502	3.90%	21	3.70%
Recreation	199	1.50%	192	1.50%	11	1.90%
Transport	303	2.30%	300	2.30%	0	0.00%
Other basic assistance	1052	8.00%	1048	8.10%	24	4.20%
Child protection services	73	0.60%	68	0.50%	12	2.10%
Parenting skills education	27	0.20%	23	0.20%	4	0.70%
Child specific specialist counselling services	27	0.20%	23	0.20%	10	1.80%
Psychological services	11	0.10%	9	0.10%	6	1.10%
Psychiatric services	9	0.10%	9	0.10%	0	0.00%
Mental health services	28	0.20%	26	0.20%	2	0.40%

Pregnancy assistance	6	0.00%	6	0.00%	0	0.00%
Family planning support	38	0.30%	38	0.30%	0	0.00%
Physical disability services	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Health/medical services	65	0.50%	53	0.40%	20	3.50%
Professional legal services	71	0.50%	35	0.30%	61	10.70%
Financial advice and counselling	107	0.80%	99	0.80%	33	5.80%
Drug/alcohol counselling	16	0.10%	16	0.10%	7	1.20%
Specialist counselling services	125	1.00%	113	0.90%	57	10.00%
Interpreter services	260	2.00%	260	2.00%	14	2.50%
Assistance with immigration services	25	0.20%	23	0.20%	0	0.00%
Culturally specific services	587	4.50%	582	4.50%	14	2.50%
Assistance to connect culturally	551	4.20%	546	4.20%	14	2.50%
Other specialised service	480	3.70%	468	3.60%	71	12.40%

Settlement Grants Program Statistics | July 2016 – June 2017

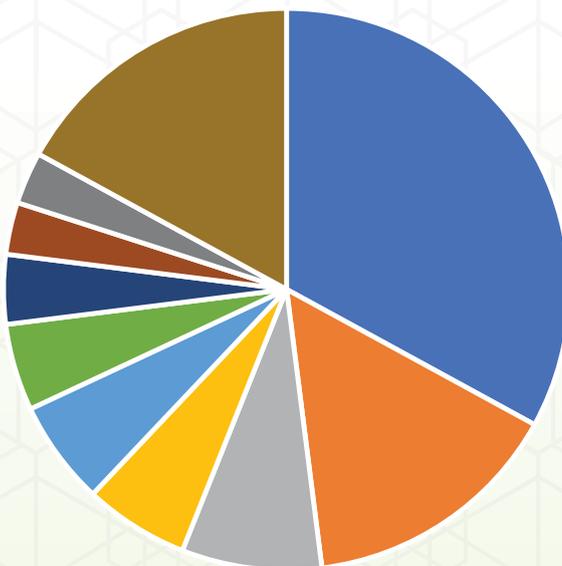
Top 10 Client Issues



Series 1

Education	37%
Financial A	22%
Accommodation	15%
Employment	6%
Legal	6%
Social Participation	4%
Immigration	3%
Family Issues	4%
Health	2%
Form	2%

Top 10 Countries



Sales

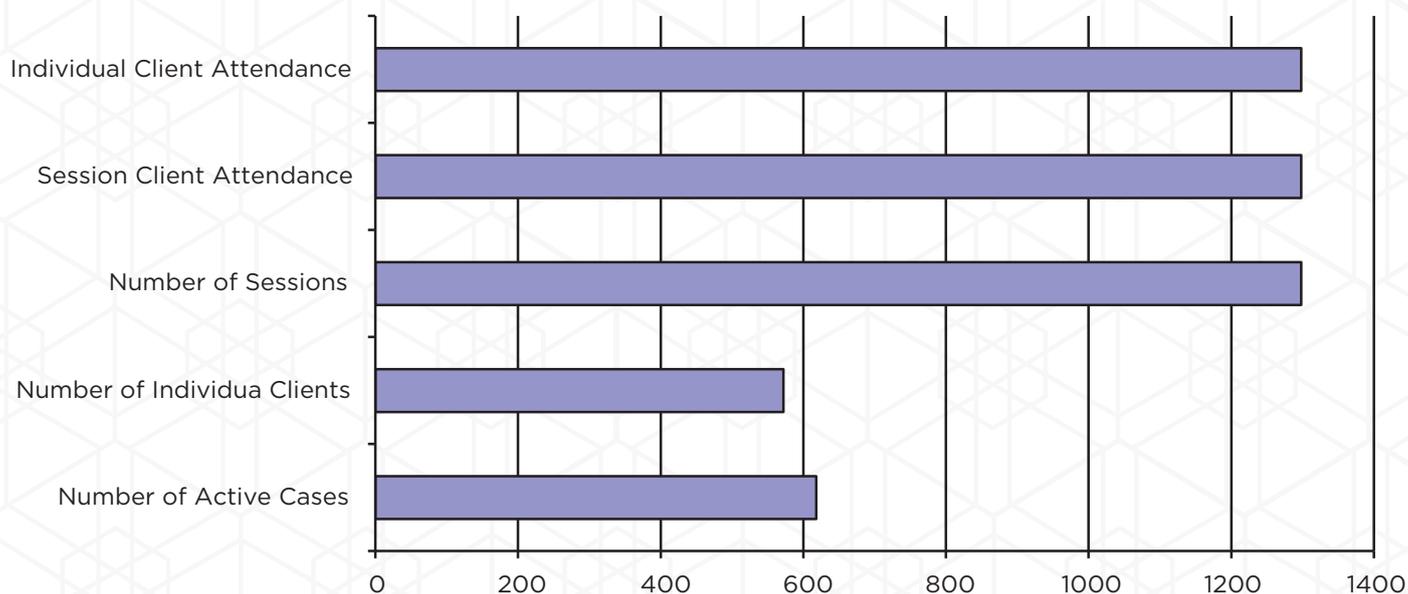
Syria	33%
Lebanon	15%
Iraq	8%
India	6%
Pakistan	6%
Morocco	5%
Egypt	4%
Somalia	3%
Afghanistan	3%
Other	17%



Emergency Relief Client Overview July 2016 – June 2017

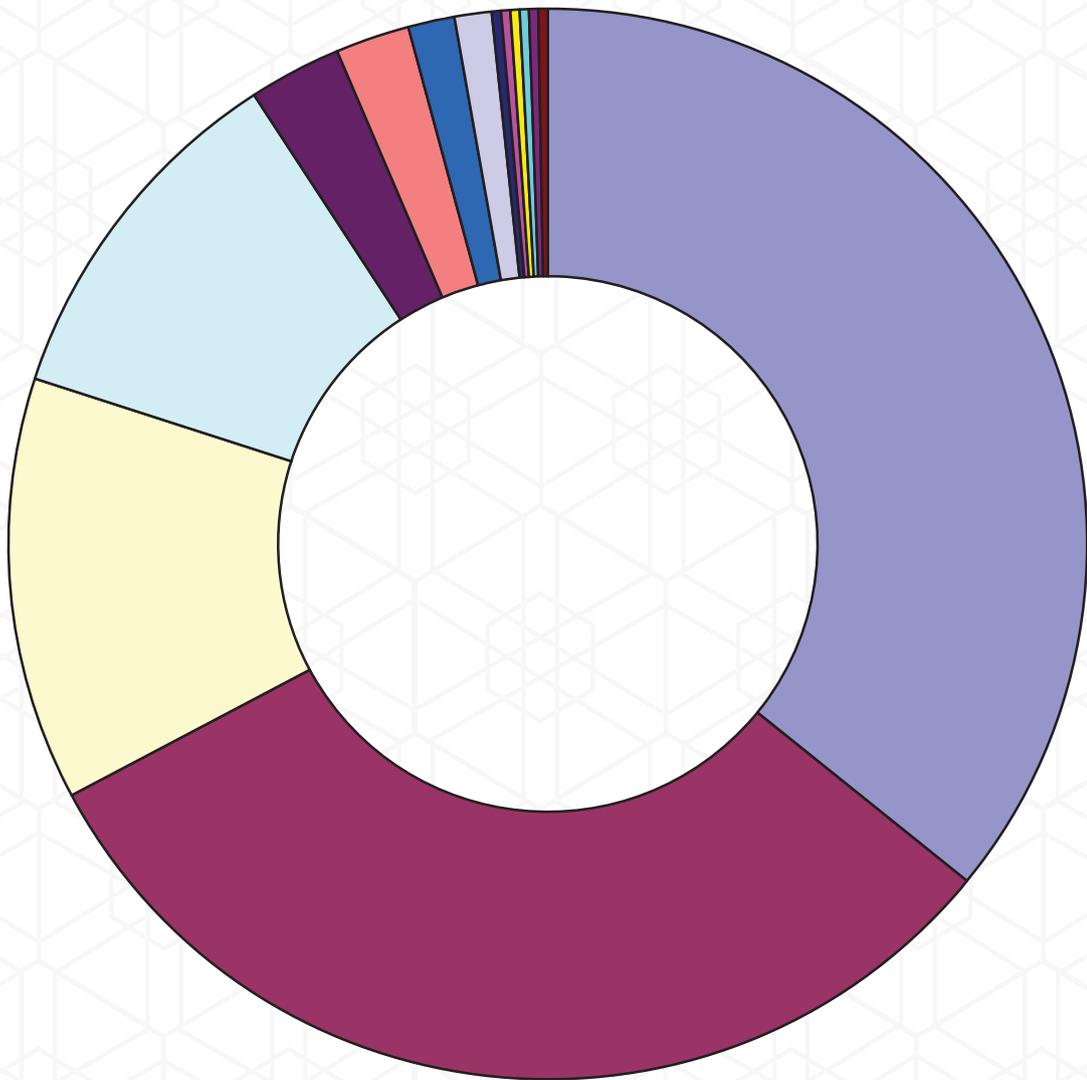
Programma Activity Name: ER
Number of Individua Clients: 572
Session Client Attendance: 1298

Number of Active Cases: 618
Number of Sessions: 1298
Individual Client Attendance: 1298



Emergency Relief Client Session Attendance by Session Focus July 2016 – June 2017

Service Type	Number of Clients
Intake/assessment	563
Food Parcels & Food Vouchers	492
Utility bills assistance	200
Information/advice/referral	170
Advocacy/Support	45
Education and Skills training	34
Rent/Mortgage assistance	20
Child/Youth focussed groups	17
Material Goods	8
Community Capacity building	4
Material aid (multiple items, parcels or vouchers)	4
Transport assistance	4
Facilitate Employment Pathways	3
Outreach	3
Intensive support	2



- Intake/assessment
- Utility bills assistance
- Advocacy/Support
- Rent/Mortgage assistance
- Material Goods
- Material aid (multiple items, parcels or vouchers)
- Facilitate Employment Pathways
- Intensive support
- Food Parcels & Food Vouchers
- Information/advice/referral
- Education and Skills training
- Child/Youth focussed groups
- Community Capacity building
- Transport assistance
- Outreach

FINANCIAL REPORT

Audited Financial Report as audited by Anwarul Islam Chowdhury, Registered Company Auditor, Chowdhury and Company, Chartered Accountant.

United Muslim Women Association Incorporated's total income for the 2016/17 financial year was \$2,846,874 representing 5% increase on the previous year. In the financial year of 2016/17 the Organisation employed 15 full time staff.

UNITED MUSLIM WOMEN ASSOCIATION INC OPERATING AS MUSLIM WOMEN ASSOCIATION ABN 50 594 813 317

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME YEAR ENDING 30 JUNE 2017

	Notes	2016	2017
Income			
Dividend and interest received		1 608	1 143
Donation received		1 700	3 064
Government grants		2 464 942	2 680 939
Membership fees received		15 946	9 257
Rent received		165 166	130 183
Service fees and other income		66 831	22 289
		2 716 194	2 846 874
Expenses			
Accounting and audit charges		29 250	37 405
Administration expenses		359 453	407 534
Depreciation charges		26 856	31 193
Education and community services		586 595	824 535
Employee and related expenses		828 958	945 726
Rent rates and water		90 884	96 814
		1 921 996	2 343 226
Profit before income tax		794 198	503 648
Income tax expense		-	-
Profit for the year		794 198	503 648



MUSLIM WOMEN ASSOCIATION
Established 1983

47 Wangee Road Lakemba NSW 2195
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