

Settlement Engagement and Transition Support, Refugee and Migrant Women's Safety

AT A GLANCE

Target Participants

Ezidi/Yazidi women in Toowoomba

Aim

The women's group provides a warm referral point to case management intervention and group education sessions to

Organisations Involved

Multicultural Australia, with guest presenters from QPASTT, Parents Next, Queensland Police Service, Centrelink, Children by Choice, Department of Transport

Funding

SETS Refugee and Migrant Women's Safety Package

Location

Toowoomba

Multicultural Australia

Introduction

The Toowoomba Settlement Engagement and Transition Support team facilitate a weekly group for vulnerable Yazidi/Ezidi women. The group provides a warm referral point to case management intervention and group education sessions to promote safety and wellbeing.

The Program

The program has seen 60+ attendees over the past year, including Ezidi, Congolese and Afghan refugee women of various ages. Participants have experienced significant trauma and social isolation, impacting their mental health and in some instances present with chronic pain. The group engages in activities such as painting, crafts and mindful movement with a purpose of promoting social inclusion for vulnerable women within their own community.

One Ezidi woman who has experienced significant trauma from ISIS arrived at the women's group very tired and sad. She shared after the class that she "felt lighter and had more

What makes your program different?

The program acts as a social and wellbeing support, whilst also providing a portal into education on topics such as employment and family wellbeing.



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energy.” She completed three artworks and was smiling and connecting with other Ezidi women by the end of the class. Other participant quotes include, “I love coming to the women’s group to get out of the house, make new friends and have something just for me”. “When I come to the group I feel happy and less pain in my body”. “Multicultural Australia listens to my problems and helps me”.

In October 2021, after building relationship and trust with the group, the SETS Women’s Group, together with the QPASTT women’s group, invited a guest speaker from the Domestic and Family Violence Action Centre (DVAC) to meet with the women and provide information regarding women’s rights to safety, access to services and information around types of violence. DVAC will be attending the women’s group again throughout 2022, to provide ongoing, culturally appropriate education around family safety.

The women’s group has facilitated education sessions by a range of presenters on various topics. For example, QPASTT delivered a session on ‘Wellbeing;’ Parents Next on ‘Employment Foundations;’ Children by Choice on ‘Planned Parenthood’ in addition to others.

Complimentary to this group, the Ezidi/Yazidi men’s group aims to support early intervention around settlement challenges and family wellbeing, and is scheduled to commence in February 2022.

Challenges

Education sessions on this topic were introduced after several months of first building rapport and trust with this community. Some participants have expressed concern around consequences of reporting abuse and shared about shameful implications of relationship breakdown. Sensitivity and exploration of cultural expectations has been paramount.

KEY LEARNINGS

1. Important to first build rapport and trust with the group before introducing topics and external presenters
2. External presenters (not already engaged with this community) need to be briefed on the trauma, education background and experiences of the group prior to delivering sessions, so that a sensitive and supported approach is taken.
3. Education sessions need to be practical and tailored to the community, who have low levels of English literacy. E.g. Women’s driving education to be delivered in a park with signs and pretend vehicles, so that skills can be learned through doing.

Outcomes

100% of the women who attended indicated low knowledge and confidence (1-2/5) about domestic and family violence before the training. After the training they indicated increased knowledge (3-5/5). Women were observed actively engaging with the kits and tools provided during the session, and asking questions.

