



VincentCare
Victoria

Preventing Homelessness among Arabic speaking Women in Moreland

Project Final Report
November 2017





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VincentCare's Aspiration

To be the leader in providing care, hope and advocacy for those facing disadvantage

VincentCare's Purpose

To create opportunities and lasting change for the most marginalised

- Support individuals and their families so that their basic needs are met in terms of food, shelter, safety and security;
- Provide access to programs and pathways that strengthen an individual's resilience and support them in accessing opportunities within their communities; and
- Advocate and build capacity in order to redress the structural inequalities in our community that create disadvantage

VincentCare's Values

Courage: to be the voice of support for the vulnerable and marginalised

Leadership: influencing and supporting those around us to achieve positive outcomes for the benefit of others - confident that real change can take place

Accountability: acting with integrity, being honest, remaining accountable and transparent in all our work and relationships

Compassion: being sensitive, understanding and caring in our interactions with all people

Excellence: being the best that we can, demonstrating professionalism in our work, always striving to find innovative and effective ways to support those facing disadvantaged in the achievement of our mission

Dignity: treating each person with respect and as we expect to be treated, offering love and acceptance



1. Executive Summary

The Preventing Homelessness among Arabic Speaking Women in Moreland (PHASWM) Project provided support to 28 women and 53 accompanying children. Support focused on three outcome areas:

- Provision of safe housing;
- Engagement with Family Violence services; and
- Engagement with case management or other identified support services.

Given the extensive waiting times to access public housing, the project focused on supporting women to enter into either private rental or community housing tenancies. Of the 28 households who were supported through the project:

- 43% of households entered into safe and sustainable private rental or community housing tenancies; and
- 32% of households were supported to sustain existing private rental tenancies after the perpetrator was removed.

The project has also demonstrated success in ensuring that women were supported to access and engage with family violence services. By the end of their involvement with the project 86% of women were engaged with a family violence service.

Linkages to other relevant support or service system resources was also a key outcome of the project. This was evidenced by:

- 93% of households were linked in with a brokerage program to seek financial assistance to establish a new home; and
- 39% of households were linked in with a homelessness case management program to provide ongoing support.

Through the twelve-month project, a number of key learnings were identified, including:

- The importance of developing effective relationships with Real Estate Agents (REAs);
- Ease of access to flexible brokerage;
- Stigma attached to women engaged with support services;
- Lack of immediate short-term housing;
- Importance and value of culturally specific support;
- Benefits of co-located services; and
- Challenges of a two-day support position

The project identified four recommendations to continue and improve the project, including:

- Continuation of the service through the existing suite of programs offered at VincentCare's Northern Community Hub;
- Continuing to establish and maintain relationships with local Real Estate Agents;
- A review of existing administrative systems to improve access to private rental; and
- Seeking further funding for the project, either through philanthropic or government sources.



2. Introduction

The Preventing Homelessness among Arabic Speaking Women in Moreland (PHASWM) Project has had a significant impact on the lives of 28 women and 53 accompanying children who have experienced violence in Moreland.

Family violence continues to be a significant problem with considerable impacts on the health, safety and wellbeing of women and children. The Victorian Government Royal Commission into Family Violence has highlighted the interplay between women and children's experience of family violence and the experience of homelessness within this cohort. Data from Victoria Police, VincentCare Victoria and Moreland City Council identified the experience of family violence by Arabic-speaking women to be of concern and highlighted this cohort as being highly vulnerable. This can be attributed to cultural barriers, a lack of knowledge regarding services available and minimal rental history within the Australian private rental market. Working from an early intervention approach was identified as being key to addressing this issue.

The PHASWM Project was established in 2016 and ran for a period of twelve-months. The project operated in partnership with Moreland City Council, the Salvation Army Crossroads Family Violence Service and Kildonan Uniting Care, with VincentCare Victoria as the lead agency.

The project was established to improve access to private rental, family violence services and case management support for Arabic-speaking women in the Moreland Local Government Area (LGA). Funding for the project was provided through a Moreland City Council Family Violence Prevention Grant.

This Final Report is a summary of the project aims, how it operated, the results it achieved, the learnings derived from the project and recommendations for how the project can continue to operate within the existing service system in Moreland.



3. Project Aim

The PHASWM Project was established with the aim to prevent homelessness amongst Arabic-speaking women who are leaving or who have left a violent relationship. Project participants would be supported to access housing through the private rental and community housing markets, as well as receiving support to access flexible brokerage resources. Participants would also be supported to access Family Violence and case management support services to ensure that safety outcomes and recovery from Family Violence are concurrently addressed.



4. Project Objectives

The PHASWM Project had several objectives:

- Provide housing information and support to Arabic speaking women who are leaving or who have left a violent relationship;
- Target services to Arabic speaking women who:
 - Have not rented a property in their own name or who have not managed a lease themselves;
 - Have not previously rented in the private rental or community housing markets;
 - Are currently residing in refuge accommodation
- Provide advocacy that supports Arabic speaking women to engage with private real estate agents and community housing providers;
- Arabic speaking women who are escaping Family Violence relationships are supported to successfully engage with Family Violence and family services where they have previously not done so (eg. Crossroads Family Violence Support Services, Kildonan Child First, Family Violence Flexible Support Packages, etc).
- Arabic speaking women who are escaping Family Violence relationships will successfully use housing assistance programs such as brokerage programs and the Bond Loan Scheme;
- Develop connections with local Real Estate Agents who will work respectfully with Arabic speaking women;
- Identify and engage with various cultural groups and associations within the Arabic-speaking community to assist Arabic speaking women to become aware of help for Family Violence and to identify ways in which these community groups might assist Arabic speaking women experiencing Family Violence to access Family Violence and Homelessness services;
- Operate a two-day per week housing support role for twelve months;
- Evaluate the project for its impact on the Arabic speaking women who have been assisted by the project; and
- Evaluate the impacts for key stakeholders including referring agencies, brokerage programs and real estate agents.



5. Project Methodology and Inputs

PHASWM Project Model

To achieve the objectives outlined in the project plan, a Project Worker was employed by VincentCare for two-days per week for a period of twelve months. The PHASWM Project Worker employed was known to the organisation and was an existing member of the Initial Assessment and Planning Team. As a result of her years working in the sector, the Project Worker had demonstrated experience in appropriately responding to women experiencing homelessness and Family Violence. The Project Worker was also fluent in both Arabic and English which was identified as an essential benefit to the role.

It was the intention of the original project model for the Project Worker to provide a “light touch” case management approach, with an emphasis on working in collaboration with other Family Violence and/or family services support providers. The project established a target of providing support to 30 women/households over the twelve month period.

Referrals

To promote the project and to establish referral pathways, the PHASWM Project Worker undertook a range of agency visits within the sector. This included visits to mainstream service providers (known as ‘hard entry points’) as well as to culturally specific groups within the community (known as ‘soft entry points’). The purpose of the agency visits was to provide information on the interplay between homelessness and family violence, the purpose of the project, and information on referral pathways for women to receive support.

Project Governance

For the establishment phase of the project, a Steering Committee was convened on a monthly basis. Membership included all project partners (VincentCare Victoria, the Salvation Army and Kildonan Uniting Care) as well as the funding body Moreland City Council. During the initial phase of the project, the Steering Committee acted as a mechanism to establish the project within the sector and to assist in the formation of relationships with various stakeholders. After the project was established, the Steering Committee moved to a bi-monthly schedule and acted as a monitoring mechanism to ensure that the project was working towards achieving its objectives.

Data Collection and Evaluation Mechanisms

The PHASWM Project collected information through several mechanisms:

- Client information was recorded in the Specialist Homelessness Information Platform (SHIP) database
- Client outputs and outcomes were recorded in a specially designed project spreadsheet
- A focus group was convened with project participants outlining their experience with the project
- An online survey was conducted with stakeholders (including project participants, real estate agents, community housing organisations, program partners and community groups) providing an opportunity to outline their experience with the project.



6. Quantitative Data

In its original grant submission, VincentCare Victoria outlined the following quantitative evaluation measures:

Housing Outcomes

- Number and proportion of Arabic speaking women re-housed and breakdown of housing/housing assistance accessed;

Family Violence Outcomes

- Number and proportion of Arabic speaking women without a Family Violence case manager who subsequently access Family Violence case management;
- Number and proportion of Arabic speaking women without a Family Violence Intervention Order who subsequently gain an Intervention Order;
- Number and proportion of Arabic speaking women who gain resource support to enhance personal safety (e.g. Security doors, alarms, mobile personal safety devices) and other forms of brokerage focussed on Family Violence recovery;
- Proportion of Arabic speaking women who do not return to the Family Violence relationship that they had left; and
- Proportion of Arabic speaking women who return to the relationship where the male perpetrator has accessed a behaviour change program, Alcohol and Other Drugs (AoD) or mental health service.

Other Support Outcomes

- Number and proportion of Arabic speaking women without other forms of homelessness, housing, financial counselling/advice and child/family case management.

Referral Source

- Number of Arabic speaking women who were engaged by the worker and the referral source.

Client Demographics

Total Number of Households	28
Number of Households with Accompanying Children	23
Number of Households with Single Women	5
Total Number of Accompanying Children	53 children
Average Age of Woman	33 years old
Country of Birth	10 women born in Lebanon
	8 women born in Australia
	3 women born in Syria
	2 women born in Iraq
	2 women born in Kuwait
	1 woman born in Egypt
	1 woman born in Israel
	1 woman born in Jordan



Housing Outcomes

# of households	Housing Outcome
10	Established a new private rental tenancy
9	Sustained an existing private rental tenancy
2	Established a new community housing tenancy
2	Moved into safe accommodation with friends or family
1	Remained in housing/relationship with perpetrator
4	Disengaged with project before outcome was known
28	Total

# of households	Housing Resources Accessed
14	Private Rental Assistance Program (PRAP) – VincentCare Victoria
11	Housing Establishment Funds (HEF)- VincentCare Victoria
3	HomeConnect Flexible Brokerage - VincentCare Victoria
28	Total

Overall the project was able to demonstrate success in supporting women to either enter into or to sustain existing private rental tenancies. On a smaller scale the project was also able to support women into community housing through liaising with Women’s Housing Ltd and Housing Choices. Project participants were also able to access a range of financial support programs including the newly created Private Rental Assistance Program. Being able to easily access brokerage was highlighted as a valuable aspect of the project.

Family Violence Support Outcomes

# of households	FV Support Outcome
5	Linked in with Family Violence support prior to participation in project
19	Linked in with Family Violence support as part of participation in project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 households referred to InTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence • 1 household referred to Berry Street Family Violence Service • 1 household referred to Crossroads Family Violence Service • 1 household referred to Safe Steps
4	Disengaged from project before a referral could be made
28	Total

# of households	Relationship Status
23	Did not return to violent relationships
1	Remained living with partner
4	Disengaged with project
28	Total

# of households	Returning to Perpetrators Who Were Engaged with Behavioural Change Programs
0	Households who returned to violent partners
0	Total



# of households	Obtained an Intervention Order
14	Previously did not have an IO and obtained IO
14	Total

The project has been able to demonstrate success in improving the safety, health and wellbeing of participants through referrals to family violence support services. By the end of twelve-month project 86% of participants were engaged with a family violence support service. Of the 28 households supported through the project, no households returned to a violent partner after leaving. Through their involvement with the project, a further fourteen participants were supported to obtain an Intervention Order.

Other Support Outcomes

# of households	Support Provider and Type of Support
13	Zakat Foundation Financial Assistance/Brokerage
11	HomeConnect Financial Assistance/Brokerage Homelessness Support/Case Management
2	Centrelink Financial Assistance
2	Arabic Welfare Support – Culturally specific
1	VincentCare Financial Counselling Financial Counselling
1	St Vincent de Paul Material Aid
14	VincentCare Private Rental Assistance Program Financial Assistance/Brokerage
44	Total
*households may have had multiple support referrals	

Accessing the National Zakat Foundation proved to be a highly valuable resource for project participants who identified as Muslim. Zakat, which provides financial support for the Muslim community, was able to be accessed in conjunction with mainstream brokerage programs such as PRAP or HomeConnect flexible brokerage. Participants also accessed a range of support services including HomeConnect, Arabic Welfare and Financial Counselling services.

Referral Sources

# of households	Referral Source
19	VincentCare Initial Assessment and Planning Team
3	Self referral
2	Safe Steps
1	Happy Mums Happy Bubs Program
1	Berry Street Family Violence
1	Kildonan Uniting Care
1	Victorian Arabic Social Services
28	Total

Having the PHASWM Project co-located at the VincentCare Northern Community Hub Access Point had a significant impact on the source of the referrals to the program. This is unsurprising given that safe housing is regularly identified as being critical to women leaving violent relationships. Should the program continue, further emphasis should be placed on building relationships with 'soft entry' referral sources such as local community groups.



7. Qualitative Data

In its original grant submission, VincentCare Victoria outlined the following qualitative evaluation measures:

- A focus group undertaken by a Council to Homeless Persons trained Peer Education Support Program (PESP) volunteer;
- A cross-section sample survey of women who used the service (survey via telephone using PESP worker and interpreter);
- A cross-section sample survey of Real Estate Agents and Community Housing Associations engaged as a consequence of this project; and
- A cross-section sample survey of Arabic-speaking cultural groups/representatives engaged as a consequence of this project.

Participant Focus Group

VincentCare Victoria convened a focus group of PHASWM Project participants in July 2017. The focus group was led by a Council to Homeless Persons Peer Education Support Program (PESP) volunteer. Five participants attended and were asked a series of questions that led into an open discussion. Questions centred on five areas:

- Culturally inclusive support
- Accessing Private Rental
- Financial support
- Support linkages and referrals
- Implications for the future

Culturally Inclusive Support

Participants identified that they found engaging with a support worker who shared a similar cultural background and spoke the same language highly beneficial to achieving their desired outcomes. Participants stated that they felt understood, that they didn't have to provide explanations for cultural customs/practices and that they could trust the Project Worker. Participants noted "sometimes hearing the words in the same language can mean a lot" and "she knows the Arabic culture and knows what happens in our country". One participant highlighted the ease of being able to form a trusting relationship with the Project Worker stating "there is less struggle when we have a person with the same culture".

Accessing Private Rental

Through the Project Worker developing independent relationships with Real Estate Agents (REAs), participants felt more supported to access private rental. It was felt that because there was an existing relationship between the Project Worker and REAs, the participant could trust the agent and felt that there was already an awareness of their experiences. This allowed for participants to build their own relationships with agents that were effective and built on a mutual understanding.

Financial Support

Project participants reported that they appreciated support when addressing their concerns around financial security. Participants stated that by having the Project Worker liaise with brokerage services this assisted them in accessing funding towards establishing their own homes or sustaining their current tenancies. This not only provided participants with the opportunity to enter the private rental market, but also alleviated financial stress. In providing this support, women and children were able to focus on recovering from Family Violence and promoted wellbeing. One participant noted that there are often many things women leaving family violence relationships are required to consider and that any support that can assist in one area can mean a great deal, noting "a woman needs a lot because we leave and flee with only the clothes on our backs".



Support Linkages and Referrals

Participants reported that they felt more supported and connected after their involvement with the project. In particular, referrals to programs such as HomeConnect, InTouch Multicultural Centre Against Violence and Arabic Welfare assisted clients in providing support beyond the scope of the project. Through these services, support was able to focus on sustaining housing, referrals to counselling, engagement in support groups and assistance to maintain children's education.

Implications for the Future

Through the focus group, participants aired concerns about being able to sustain their private rental properties after one year as well as feeling confident to secure private rental in the future (if required). Participants reported that they felt that private rental was not a sustainable long-term option and that it would be challenging for them to maintain this accommodation, particularly if the rent is increased at the end of the initial 12-month lease period. Participants expressed a need for secure housing in which rents were fixed for a period of time and noted that the insecurity of private rental resulted in feelings of anxiety.

Participant Survey

A survey was offered to all participants with only eight participants choosing to complete the survey. The survey was conducted by the same PESP volunteer and was undertaken via telephone with an interpreter. The survey consisted of nine questions that focused on the participant's experience of being involved with the project as well as questions regarding their experiences with family violence.

- In regards to their feelings of safety, 100% of survey respondents advised that their feelings of safety had increased as a result of their involvement with the project.
- 50% of survey respondents advised that they had a current Intervention Order in place.
- 100% of survey respondents stated that they felt Confident or Very Confident to access support services when needed.
- In regards to feeling that their support needs were met, 100% of survey respondents stated that their support needs were addressed through their involvement with the project.
- 88% of survey respondents noted that it was beneficial to have the Project Support Worker able to speak Arabic.

The survey also afforded respondents an opportunity to provide comments on the project, including:

- "Have more time to work in this program and do it everywhere in Melbourne and Australia. Many women are suffering from violence and sometimes an IVO doesn't really protect them. But through this program they will feel that there is someone who cares and you are not alone. Of course the language is a big part of understanding and feeling more comfortable."
- "I support this program and I think it will save many women's lives and protect families so good luck and I hope it will grow bigger."
- "I don't think they need to improve because everything is good about the program. They are good at listening and helpful and full of humanity."
- My words can't represent the great support I got from VincentCare and from Obaida specifically. She is a very supportive woman and gives me the power and energy to afford my hard times. I didn't suffer the language or cultural barrier at all with her."

The results of the Participant Survey were able to confirm that the project had been able to achieve some of its key objectives including its ability to increase access to required housing and family violence support services, the value of culturally specific support and project's ability to increase feelings of safety amongst participants.

Real Estate Agent and Housing Association Survey



The response rate of Real Estate Agents (REAs) and Housing Associations in the survey was extremely low with only one Real Estate Agency (YPA Glenroy) choosing to participate. However the feedback that was provided was highly positive and illustrated the strength of the relationship that was established between the REA and the PHASWM Project. YPA Glenroy and their rental agent Nora Kandakji were highly responsive to working with the project. As an Arabic-speaking woman, Nora was an ideal agent to work with and demonstrated a respectful and comprehensive response to clients. This included arranging private inspection times as well as identifying properties that might be suitable. Nora was able to demonstrate sensitivity in working with this cohort and was understanding of their barriers.

It was also noted to be beneficial that Nora had an understanding of the documents required for participants to access brokerage services and efficiently provided these. Nora stated that she was confident in approving women's private rental applications knowing that support was involved. Nora did feedback that faster administrative processing times would be advantageous to women escaping family violence as the private rental market is highly competitive. Having to wait for a Residential Bond to be approved through the Bond Loan Scheme or to receive financial assistance for rent in advance does not positively influence a landlord's willingness to accept applications from this cohort. Nora acknowledged that having to explain to landlords that tenants may be supported by a service can cast doubts in landlord's minds about their suitability as a tenant and this requires more persuasion as an agent to approve the applicant. This feedback highlights the need for brokerage services to be responsive and flexible in being able to provide financial support.

In terms of anecdotal feedback, one agent stated that they no longer wished to work with VincentCare due to the fact that a participant was supported to break their lease due to the experience of family violence. Despite Section 233A of the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (Application for new tenancy agreement because of final family violence intervention order - which affords victims of family violence the ability to terminate a tenancy due to family violence), the woman was still viewed as an undesirable tenant. This example highlights the housing barriers women escaping family violence continue to experience in the private rental market and identifies areas of education for real estate agents.

Support Services/Cultural Groups Survey

Two support services (Arabic Welfare and Crossroads Family Violence Service) provided feedback on their experience with the project.

Arabic Welfare noted the prevalence of homelessness in Moreland and commended the project on its success in supporting Arabic-speaking women experiencing family violence. It was noted that "this project was really good because it enabled these women to explore various housing options and supported them to end the violent relationship". The service acknowledged the importance of the Project Worker in being able to build and maintain relationships with real estate agents and resulted in women being able to access private rental. Arabic Welfare noted the value of the project, stating "one of my current clients is a woman who accessed the project and stated that without the support of the project she wouldn't have been able to secure housing because she is a single mother with two children and her only income is her Centrelink payments".

The Crossroads Family Violence Manager acknowledged the success of the project in being able to achieve positive outcomes with participants and being able to meet an identified service system gap. Crossroads found the Project Steering Committee meetings to be extremely useful and clear around the guidance and support the project needed. However Crossroads did identify that the partnership between VincentCare, Crossroads and Kildonan was largely strategic and did not have an operational focus. Crossroads questioned whether a change in focus could have yielded different results. Crossroads also acknowledged that there was value in the project extending past the initial twelve month period as well as identifying that there may be similar communities within Moreland that could benefit from a similar targeted approach.



8. Key Learnings

The PHASWM Project identified key learnings across three outcome areas: access to housing resources, engaging with Family Violence support, and support provision.

Access to Housing Resources

- **Liaison with Real Estate Agents:** PHASWM Project participants highlighted the significance of the PHASWM Project Worker acting as a key liaison with real estate agents (REAs). Participants felt supported through the application process as well as feeling that they could trust REAs due to the established relationship with the Project Worker.
- **Ease of access to flexible brokerage:** The PHASWM Project Worker highlighted the need for easy access to flexible brokerage for clients to help in establishing their homes. This includes brokerage for rent in advance, rental arrears, residential tenancy bonds, removalists, furniture/whitegoods and the connection of utilities. The PHASWM Project Worker acknowledged that a large part of her role involved coordinating access to brokerage, often within a 24-hour period to meet timeframes set by real estate agents. Some REAs noted instances where it could take considerable time to receive rent in advance or a bond due to a tenant accessing brokerage resources, which could lead to REAs feeling uneasy about the long term success of the tenancy. The PHASWN Project Worker identified positive and quick outcomes for clients when brokerage was flexible and easy to access, through programs such as VincentCare's HomeConnect and Private Rental Assistance Programs (PRAP).
- **Stigma attached to women engaged with support services:** The PHASWM Project was able to highlight the difference in attitudes held by REAs in relation to women engaged with support services. In some instances, being engaged with a support service acted as an incentive to approve rental applications with the knowledge that there were services already engaged and could assist in maintaining the tenancy. Other REAs noted that this could often be a deterrent for landlords to approve applications if they believed that a tenant would require support to obtain or sustain a tenancy.

Engaging with Family Violence Support

- **Lack of immediate short-term housing:** Participants in the PHASWM Project noted that a primary concern when leaving a violent relationship was safe accommodation to exit into. Participants highlighted a lack of immediate short term housing that could be accessed quickly upon leaving a violent relationship. This type of housing would provide safe accommodation while the women were supported to access private rental and to establish a new home.

Support Provision

- **Importance and value of culturally specific support:** The PHASWM Project identified the importance of having an Arabic-speaking woman providing direct support to project participants. This does not only provide an ease of communication through speaking the same language, but is also accompanied by an awareness of shared cultural norms, and understanding of migration experiences, an understanding of cultural gender norms and relationship power dynamics. This was also evidenced in the number of referrals that were made to In Touch Multicultural Centre Against Violence as opposed to mainstream family violence support services. Project participants also identified this as a benefit of working with an Arabic-speaking female REA and the comfort/safety that this provided.



- **Benefits of Co-located Services:** The PHASWM Project was able to highlight the benefits of having co-located services based at a homelessness Access Point. Having services co-located allowed for regular and informal communication across programs in regards to participants, as well as being able to seek out opportunities for further collaboration. Furthermore, by employing a woman with prior experience working within the Initial Assessment and Planning Team at the Access Point, this resulted in the Project Worker being able to draw on her existing knowledge of the service system.
- **Challenges of a two-day support position:** Through the twelve-month period, the PHASWM Project highlighted the challenges of providing support on a two-day per week position. Challenges were largely related to the delays experienced in communication with both participants and support services. This was most profound in instances where project participants were approved for a rental property and were required to provide payment for rent in advance and a residential bond within 24-48 hours. This often required the Project Worker to diverge from her substantive role within the Initial Assessment and Planning Team (IA&P), and had ramifications for service delivery in IA&P.



9. Recommendations

As a result of the evaluation of the Preventing Homelessness among Arabic speaking Women in Moreland (PHASWM) Project, the following recommendations have been identified:

- **Continuation of service:** Utilising the suite of programs available at VincentCare's Northern Community Hub, it is intended that Arabic speaking women escaping family violence will continue to be supported to access private rental. Programs with an emphasis on private rental access (including the Private Rental Assistance Program and HomeConnect) will continue to work with this specific cohort and provide support to either establish or maintain private rental accommodation. This will include the timely provision of financial assistance as well as active referrals to family violence support services.
- **Relationships with Real Estate Agents:** In recognising the importance of building and maintaining effective relationships with Real Estate Agents, VincentCare Victoria will remain committed to this area of work and will dedicate existing resources to achieve this goal. This will be achieved through its Initial Assessment and Planning Team, the Private Rental Assistance Program, the HomeConnect program and HomeDirect.
- **Review of Administrative Systems:** To effectively support women to access private rental, VincentCare Victoria will undertake a review of its existing administrative systems. This will be to ensure that response times are prompt and that such systems do not negatively impact on a person's ability to access private rental. This will be achieved through the Hume Moreland Launch Site reforms.
- **Employment of experienced and skilled staff:** Ensure employment procurement processes are in place to attract a workforce that is reflective and can expertly support the diverse client demographic base.
- **Community capacity building and training:** Work with the Arabic community through regular activities to build the knowledge base of staff and develop working relationships to assist in accessing Arabic services.
- **Seek further funding:** VincentCare Victoria will continue to seek funding opportunities to continue the PHASWM Project. This will include seeking funding through a range of sources including philanthropic and various levels of government. To effectively meet the existing service need, VincentCare will seek to expand the Project Worker position to 4-5 days. It is expected that this could increase the annual client output to 120 clients annually.



10. Conclusion

During its twelve-month duration, the Preventing Homelessness among Arabic-speaking Women in Moreland (PHASWM) Project was able to demonstrate a consistent need for culturally specific housing support for women and children escaping family violence. The PHASWM Project was able to demonstrate that housing focused support and financial assistance are critical in supporting Arabic speaking women to access or maintain private rental.

Over the span of the PHASWM Project, support was provided to 28 Arabic speaking women and 53 accompanying children. Support focused on three outcome areas:

- Provision of safe housing;
- Engagement with Family Violence services; and
- Engagement with case management or other identified support services.

The project was able to demonstrate successful housing outcomes in regards to private rental and community housing with:

- 43% of households entered into safe and sustainable private rental or community housing tenancies; and
- 32% of households were supported to sustain existing private rental tenancies after the perpetrator was removed.

The project also demonstrated success in ensuring that Arabic speaking women were supported to access and engage with family violence services. By the end of their involvement with the project 86% of Arabic speaking women were engaged with a family violence service.

Linkages to other relevant support or service system resources was also a key outcome of the project. This was evidenced by:

- 93% of households being linked to a brokerage program to seek financial assistance to establish a new home; and
- 39% of households being linked to a homelessness case management program to provide ongoing support.

The PHASWM Project identified a number of key learnings including:

- The importance of developing effective relationships with Real Estate Agents (REAs);
- Ease of access to flexible brokerage;
- There is a stigma attached to women engaged with support services;
- Lack of immediate short-term housing;
- The importance and value of culturally specific support;
- Benefits of co-located services; and
- Challenges of a two-day support position

The project identified four recommendations to continue and improve the project, including:

- Continuation of the service through the existing suite of programs offered at VincentCare's Northern Community Hub;
- Continuing to establish and maintain relationships with local Real Estate Agents;
- A review of existing administrative systems to improve access to private rental; and
- Seeking further funding for the project, either through philanthropic or government sources.



11. Glossary of Terms

Term/Acronym	Definition
Access Point	An Access Point is a service gateway for clients to access homelessness resources. The role of an Access Point is outlined in the Department of Health and Human Services Opening Doors framework. Each Local Government Area (LGA) is attached to a specific Access Point. VincentCare Victoria is the Access Point for the Moreland and Hume LGAs.
FV	Family Violence
HEF	Housing Establishment Fund – a form of brokerage provided to Specialist Homelessness Services to purchase crisis accommodation, assist with rent in advance and rental arrears.
IA&P	The Initial Assessment and Planning Team is responsible for the assessment, triage and referral of all clients who present to the Access Point seeking assistance. This may include the provision of crisis accommodation, referral to a support service or information on accessing different types of accommodation.
In Touch Multicultural Centre Against Violence	In Touch is a leading accredited service, which provides services, programs and responses to issues of family violence in migrant and refugee communities.
LGA	Local Government Area
PESP	The Peer Education Support Program provides an opportunity for people with a lived experience of homelessness to receive formal training and support to share their experiences.
PHASWM Project	Preventing Homelessness among Arabic Speaking Women in Moreland Project
PRAP	Private Rental Assistance Program
REAs	Real Estate Agents
Safe Steps	State-wide Family Violence service responsible for intake and referral to refugees and Family Violence specialist services
Zakat Foundation	Zakat is a payment made annually under Islamic law on certain kinds of property and used for charitable and religious purposes, one of the Five Pillars of Islam. The National Zakat Foundation is an organisation that collects and distributes Zakat those who identify as Muslim who are in need.