



MULTICULTURAL RESPONSE  
TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE  
WORKING GROUP

E MulticulturalWG@responsetosv.com.au  
P (07) 3391 0004

01 August 2025

Child Safety Commission of Inquiry  
GPO Box 783, Brisbane City Qld 4000  
[info@childsafetyinquiry.qld.gov.au](mailto:info@childsafetyinquiry.qld.gov.au)

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

Dear Commissioner,

The Multicultural Response to Sexual Violence Working Group welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the **Commission of Inquiry into Queensland's Child Safety System**.

The Working Group comprises professionals, advocates, and organisations with extensive knowledge supporting children, women, and families from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds across Queensland. The membership of The Working Group includes representatives from settlement and community organisations, family and domestic violence services, legal advocates, and sexual violence specialists.

The current 16 members of the Working Group are: BRISSC, Zig Zag Young Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Service, Immigrant Women's Support Service (IWSS), Basic Rights Queensland, True Relationships and Reproductive Health, World Wellness Group, Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma (QPASTT), Multicultural Australia, Refugee Health Network Queensland, Community, Centre Against Sexual Violence (CASV), Settlement Services International (SSI), UQRespect, Romero Centre, WWILD and one individual community member.

Our submission seeks to highlight critical systemic barriers and structural omissions that marginalise CALD children and families and exclude their voices from shaping and informing processes in the Child Safety system.

## **Key Concerns**

### **1. Lack of Access and Inclusion of CALD Voices in Commission Processes**

The Commission's processes to date have not been inclusive or accessible to CALD communities. There is no evidence that public communications have been translated, that interpreters were provided, or that culturally safe engagement strategies were used to facilitate CALD families' meaningful participation. This contradicts the Commission's stated objective of embedding lived experiences into its recommendations. As stated in the QFCC's December 2024 report:

"Effective recommendations must be persuasive, well-articulated, and sensitive to systemic complexities."<sup>2</sup> However, this expectation disproportionately excludes individuals for whom English is a second, third or fourth language or dialect. Without accessible and meaningful mechanisms for CALD families to contribute, any recommendations risk being disconnected from the lived realities of those they aim to protect.

## **Recommendation 1: Representation and Inclusive Consultation**

Develop a CALD engagement strategy co-designed with multicultural organisations and community leaders to ensure inclusive and culturally safe consultation processes.

## **2. Absence of Demographic Data on CALD Children**

There is currently no disaggregated demographic data collected or publicly reported by the Department of Child Safety or QFCC on CALD background children. This lack of data significantly impairs the system's ability to assess needs, monitor trends, and deliver targeted support. Without a demographic baseline, Queensland cannot claim a child-centered or evidence-based approach to diversity.

In 2024, the Department compiled a profile of children who had been in care for more than three months. While 31% were assessed as having intellectual or developmental delays, 20% with mental illness or behavioural disorders, and 41% with diagnosed or suspected disabilities, no cultural or linguistic data was collected.

This glaring omission raises serious concerns about the legitimacy and accuracy of these assessments and the validity of data analysis. The absence of cultural awareness reflects a framework that is effectively culture-blind, lacking knowledge and understanding of the critical role that language and culture play in the lives of CALD background children. As such, a key concern remains: are the true needs of CALD children being accurately identified or met? <sup>3</sup>

This absence of cultural data undermines the legitimacy and accuracy of any system-wide analysis, assessments, and planning. It reflects an organisational culture insufficiently attuned to the importance of cultural identity, migration experiences, and language in a child's life and wellbeing.

## **Recommendation 2: Data Gaps and System Oversight**

Mandate disaggregated data collection on ethnicity, language, and migration background across all relevant child protection systems and reporting.

## **3. Cultural and Linguistic Barriers in Engagement**

CALD background families face entrenched barriers in their interactions with the Child Protection system. These include: limited system knowledge, language and literacy barriers in English and ethnic languages, trauma-based mistrust of authorities, and lack of culturally credible support channels. These factors increase the likelihood of miscommunication, disengagement, and preventable child removals.<sup>7 8</sup> The 2008 Healthy Family Relationships Project documented these same systemic issues among Sudanese and Burundian families.<sup>6</sup> These obstacles remain unresolved and continue to affect families' safety and access to justice.

## **Recommendation 3: Visibility of CALD Children and Families**

Ensure policy, services, and complaints mechanisms reflect and respond to the specific risks, barriers, and support needs of CALD children and families.

## **4. Foster Care Recruitment Ignores Cultural Safety**

The *Queensland Foster Carer Demographic Insights Report* (June 2024) reveals a system increasingly focused on growing the foster care sector with evident omission and attention to cultural considerations and therefore a child centered focus on safety. The report profiles nine types of foster carers including: empty nesters, teachers, healthcare workers, and faith-based carers, yet none reflect on the importance of cross-cultural understanding, experiences or awareness of migration trauma, or the specific needs of children and families from CALD backgrounds. <sup>1</sup>

Queensland's eligibility criteria required of those who are asked to foster and care for Queensland's most vulnerable children do not include demonstrated knowledge of trauma, diversity, or cultural safety. This is unacceptable given the growing number of CALD background children entering out-of-home care. Without such safeguards, the system risks reinforcing cycles of trauma and neglecting the unique needs of these children.

## **Recommendation 4: Investment in Cultural Safety and CALD-Specific Services**

Increase investment in CALD-specific services and embed cultural safety, trauma-informed training, and diversity criteria across recruitment, assessment, and support processes.

## **5. Systemic Omission of CALD Children and the Need for a Multicultural Lens**

Despite CALD communities comprising over 30% of Queensland's population,<sup>5</sup> systemic reports rarely reflect this diversity. The June 2024 Foster Carer report makes only passing reference to cultural diversity, with no linked strategy for inclusion.

This lack of attention to cultural factors in research, policy, and reform creates unacceptable risks for children from CALD backgrounds. The child safety system must demonstrate, through clear evidence, that cultural competence exists at all levels, from frontline service delivery to systems, leadership, and governance.

The child safety system must demonstrate cultural competence through:

- Staff understanding of how cultural worldviews shape family dynamics;
- Awareness of personal bias and its effect on engagement;
- Documentation that reflects shared understanding and context;
- Accurate and accountable assessments that can withstand the impact of high staff turnover.

### **Recommendation 5: Embedding a Multicultural Lens in Child Safety Practice**

Embed a consistent multicultural lens across the system through mandatory cultural competence training, culturally informed assessments, and disaggregated data collection to ensure fair and accurate outcomes for CALD families.

## **Summary of Recommendations**

The Working Group respectfully urges the Commission to adopt the following:

1. **Develop a CALD Engagement Strategy**, co-designed with multicultural organisations and community leaders.
2. **Mandate disaggregated data collection** on ethnicity, language, and migration status across all child protection and early childhood systems.
3. **Include cultural and linguistic identity** as a core component of case assessments, placement decisions, and risk frameworks.
4. **Embed cultural competence and trauma-informed training** as mandatory for all foster carer applicants and assessors.
5. **Employ trained cross-cultural workers and engage accredited interpreters**, especially in frontline roles and investigatory phases.
6. **Recognise cultural norms and histories of state-based trauma** that may induce fear, limited trust, and hinder engagement with authorities.
7. **Integrate mandatory and ongoing cross-cultural training** across the child protection workforce.
8. **Strengthen oversight of placement suitability** to ensure placements reflect children's cultural and linguistic needs.
9. **Ensure current disability and behavioural assessments are culturally appropriate** and reflect CALD children lived experiences.
10. **Include CALD children, families, and carers** in all Inquiry modules, particularly those addressing safety, placement, and complaints.
11. **Require cultural safety standards across all recruitment campaigns** and carer vetting processes.

## **Conclusion**

Queensland's Child Safety system must serve all children and not just those whose families can navigate a predominantly Western, English-speaking system. CALD background children deserve equal protection, culturally safe services, and a genuine voice in shaping policies that affect them.

We are also concerned that the Inquiry's early focus on complaints mechanisms seems to center on residential and foster carers, while neglecting complaints raised by children and their families, particularly those from culturally diverse backgrounds. Ensuring that Queensland's children and families can safely

raise concerns must be an equal, if not higher, priority.

We commend the Commission for undertaking this important work and urge you to ensure a genuinely inclusive, child-centered approach. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with the Commissioner or Inquiry staff to discuss our recommendations in greater detail.

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "BO - Piatkowski", is centered on a light gray rectangular background.

Beata Ostapiej-Piatkowski

On Behalf of:

*The Multicultural Response to Sexual Violence Working Group*

## **References**

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