



28 January 2022

The Hon. Josh Frydenberg
Treasurer
Department of Treasury
Langton Crescent
PARKES ACT 2600

By upload to consultation website

cc. The Hon. David Coleman MP, Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, and Member for Banks, NSW

Prebudget Submission for 2022-23: Specialist Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Lived Experience Peer Support Workforce Service Model in Greater Western Sydney

Dear Treasurer,

SydWest Multicultural Services is pleased to present this submission outlining a Mental Health workforce initiative for CALD communities that we recommend the Morrison Government consider supporting in the 2022-23 Federal Budget.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) estimates that almost half of Australia's population is CALD. Yet of last year's record-breaking mental health spend of \$2.3bn only a small proportion was spent on meeting the unique mental health needs of CALD communities or addressing the service gap, where current research shows that CALD communities have lower rates of mental health service utilisation (26 per 100,000 compared with 48 per 100,000 of the general population).

The need for more investment in CALD specific mental health initiatives is critical. There is a hidden high-level of need in CALD communities, which have been identified as a priority population for suicide prevention by the AIHW, and according to Suicide Prevention Australia there is a shadow epidemic of multicultural suicidal distress with retrospective case reviews of deaths by suicide in Victoria between 2009-13, and in Queensland between 2013-15 showing that 21% were CALD.

In this submission we sensibly propose a service model that extends the outreach of the mental health system, is underpinned by SydWest's infrastructure and stability having served multicultural communities for over 35 years with over 200 community workers, and is designed, governed, and employed by CALD

HEAD OFFICE
Blacktown
Level 2, 125 Main Street
Blacktown NSW 2148
Phone: 02 9621 6633
Fax: 02 9831 5625

Mt Druitt Hub
Level 1
13 Cleeve Close
Mt Druitt NSW 2770
Phone: 02 9625 0455
Fax: 02 9625 0322

Penrith Hub
Office temporarily closed
Open for business
by appointment only
Phone: 02 9621 6633
Fax: 02 9831 5625

Rouse Hill Hub
Vinegar Hills Community
Centre, 29 Main Street
Rouse Hill Town Centre
NSW 2155
Phone: 02 9621 6633



people to partner with PHNs to improve access and availability of high quality and culturally responsive mental health care in Greater Western Sydney.

Innovative service delivery models that reflect community strengths and needs, as well as incorporate the voices of consumers/carers and support increased service utilization have been invited by PHN Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plans, and the Draft National Mental Health Workforce Strategy (2021).

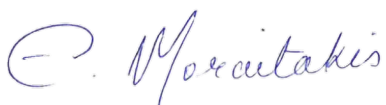
With an investment from the Government in this year's Federal Budget, we can work in partnership to establish Australia's first culturally responsive peer support workforce led by CALD people. This also offers an added benefit and unprecedented opportunity for CALD consumers and carers to start a career in mental health that they currently have limited access to due to a lack of resources, educational background and formal qualifications.

We propose initiating the service model in Greater Western Sydney where SydWest MS operates alongside the PHN areas of Southwestern Sydney, Western Sydney and Nepean Blue Mountains, and is one of the most culturally diverse regions in Australia. We are confident that there will be potential to replicate the service model in other PHN areas based on the evaluation results, evidence and best practice our pilot demonstrates.

We have developed this model in consultation with CALD communities, the National Mental Health Commission, and the Commonwealth Department of Health. We look forward to participating in any future discussions about the proposal set out in this submission as part of the government's consideration process.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me on 0413 422 514 and ceo@sydwestms.org.au

Sincerely,



Elfa Moraitakis
CEO
SydWest Multicultural Services

SydWest Multicultural Services

Connecting Cultures.
Building Community.

CALD Specialist Peer Support Workforce

Improving Access and Quality of Mental Health Care for CALD communities

2022/23 Pre-Budget Submission to Federal Treasury

Contents

Position Statement	3
Background	4
The Challenge	5
The Solution	6
Proposed Operating Model and Structure	7
Why this Partnership?	8
Service Phases	9
Funding Request	10

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which we work, and we pay our respects to the Elders, past, present, and future, for they hold the memories, cultural and dreams of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and continual relationship with the land, and we recognise the importance of young people, who are the future leaders.

Position Statement

For more than 35 years, SydWest Multicultural Services have been assisting and empowering thousands of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) peoples across Greater Western Sydney to address the social determinants of mental health and become valued members of Australian Society.

We support CALD peoples of all ages and backgrounds, particularly those who are vulnerable and most in need by offering a range of flexible and integrated programs that promote mental health and wellbeing for:

- Men, women, and families;
- Children and youths;
- Seniors; and,
- People living with a disability.

As a leading community organisation, we offer direct services to strengthen CALD communities and help those in crisis with their immediate and complex needs. It is our vision to grow and increase our capabilities to provide more services to meet the mental health needs of our growing multicultural communities with the proposed CALD peer support model within this submission.

Mental health partnerships with multicultural services and community managed organisations, like SydWest MS, have been recognised as important for CALD populations in the NSW Strategic Framework and Workforce Plan for Mental Health (2018-22). Moreover, innovative service delivery models that reflect community strengths and needs, as well as incorporate the voices of consumers/carers and support increased service utilization have been invited by PHN/LHN Plans and the Draft National Mental Health Workforce Strategy.

Nowhere are these models needed more than in Greater Western Sydney where SydWest MS operates and the three PHN/LHN areas of Nepean Blue Mountains, Western Sydney and Southwestern Sydney have a high proportion of residents that were born overseas compared to NSW and Australia overall (27.6%, 39.4% and 43.3% respectively in 2016) and higher still in some LGAs, such as Cumberland (49.7%). This high level of multicultural diversity is likely to remain stable or increase as the historical trend of Greater Western Sydney as a preferred settlement area for new migrants will continue as NSW reopens again after the pandemic. This creates a pressing need for mental health services to respond in culturally responsive ways.

In this submission and request for funding we seek to build on our expertise and experience working with multicultural communities in health and mental health to provide a joined-up CALD Specialist Lived Experience Workforce model to improve access and availability of high quality and culturally responsive mental health care in Greater Western Sydney.

Our COVID-19 response is a testament to our success in linking multicultural communities with health authorities to achieve public health initiatives in a culturally responsive way. In 2021 we promoted the establishment of the Community Leaders COVID-19 Emergency Taskforce to support the Stay Home messaging and advocate for the local health needs of 20 CALD communities with local decision-making bodies and health authorities, across Blacktown LGA. Our connections to local CALD communities led to numerous initiatives that reinforced messaging by supporting CALD people in lockdown with culturally appropriate food, emergency vouchers and virtual welfare door knocks.

We can similarly respond to the mental health needs of the multicultural communities we serve with an investment from the Government in this year's Budget.

Background

Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) peoples make up almost half of Australia's population (AIHW) however CALD specific funding commitments were proportionally low in the 2021/22 Federal and NSW State Budgets. NSW is the most culturally diverse State in Australia with 1 in 4 speaking a language other than English at home, yet despite the unique needs of CALD communities there was zero CALD specific allocations made in the 2021/22 NSW Budget Papers.

Immigration, including a significant humanitarian intake, will be a continuing major contributor to the population growth of NSW and Australia. NSW Premier recently called for a boost to skilled migration as the state reopens, and NSW officials have reportedly advised the Premier that Australia should bring in 2 million over the next five years to strengthen the economy. The Federal Government has signalled that it supports a quick resumption of the migration program following the pause during the pandemic. This creates an even more pressing need for mental health services to be culturally responsive, on top of the pandemic pressures that have exacerbated the mental health issues of vulnerable CALD communities.

Consultations by Southwestern Sydney PHN (SWS PHN) to assess population needs in one of Australia's most culturally and linguistically diverse regions with about 43.3% of people born overseas, revealed a lack of early intervention and support services for people with persistent and recurring thoughts of suicide. Suicide prevention was particularly challenging in CALD communities because mental health issues were being left untreated until the situation became a crisis due to a poor recognition of the need for professional care, a lack of information, cultural stigma and language barriers.

Factors that further complicate CALD mental health include the loss of close family bonds, stresses of migration, limited knowledge of the mental health system, and a lack of culturally responsive service availability. Current research shows that CALD communities have lower rates of mental health service utilisation (26 per 100,000 compared with 48 per 100,000 of the general population).

A service model underpinned by SydWest MS capabilities and is designed, governed and delivered by CALD people will:

- Increase access and availability of culturally responsive support for distress and suicidality in CALD Communities
- Overcome barriers to CALD help-seeking via CALD staff outreach and system navigation
- Upskill and provide employment to CALD peer support staff
- Increase suicide prevention gatekeeper capability through CALD communities. The training and working model will enable CALD people not only to be staff, but also to function as gatekeepers in the community, recognising difficulties in individuals and assisting them to seek help. The consultation process will assist to determine a range of community engagement models best suited to meet the needs of CALD communities.
- Create learning opportunities for PHN/LHN staff and clinicians in culturally responsive mental health support for CALD through collaboration with existing services
- Create a model which has basis for future expansion State and Nation-wide
- Create an entry point to an ecosystem of existing mental health services that culturally responsive services

The Challenge

Despite a widely recognised dearth of data, CALD communities have been identified as a priority population for suicide prevention by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, and according to Suicide Prevention Australia there is indication of a high level of suicidal distress:

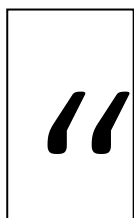
- A retrospective case review of 2839 people who died by suicide in Victoria from 2009-2013 found of those with a mental illness diagnosis, 21% were from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Of those with no mental illness diagnosis, 20.9% were from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
- People born overseas make up 21.3% of the suicides in Queensland between 2013–2015.

There is a hidden number of CALD suicides within the increasing level of suicide in NSW that is likely to continue in 2022, with NSW surveillance monitoring data indicating that 2021 figures are higher than 2020 and 2019 figures over the same period.

Table 1. The increasing Suicide Trend in NSW over the last 3 years¹

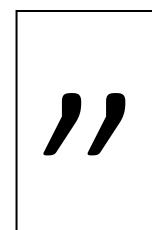
Period	1 January to 30 September 2019	1 January to 30 September 2020	1 January to 30 September 2021
Suspected Suicide Deaths in NSW	666	669	687

A SydWest MS Specialist CALD Peer Support Workforce embedded within the multicultural community will reach people earlier in suicidal distress and prevent the onset of suicidal behaviour. This approach does not wait for people to seek help. It strengthens and builds on currently available support networks established by SydWest and utilized by multicultural peoples in the CALD community to become entry points to the mental health system and prevent issues from becoming a crisis in one to one, family and group settings.



Refugees and migrants do face harsh conditions that put their mental health under significant stress. While many of them show remarkable resilience, some need extra support to rebuild their lives.

Peer support can often make the biggest difference – UN Refugee Agency.



¹ NSW Ministry of Health, Report 13: NSW Suicide Monitoring System 2021

The Solution

Many of the gaps between the needs of CALD communities, the priorities of policy makers, and the mental health services provided can be addressed by an effective Specialist Peer Support Workforce that is led by CALD Lived Experience and facilitated by Multicultural Services.

The establishment of Australia's first culturally responsive peer support workforce led by CALD people at SydWest MS offers an unprecedented opportunity for CALD consumers and carers to start a career in mental health that they currently have limited access to due to a lack of educational background and qualifications.

SydWest MS offers a trusted community platform from which to facilitate the CALD Specialist Peer Support Workforce to extend the outreach of mental health services and improve CALD community access and service utilization in Greater Western Sydney.

To address the mental health needs of CALD communities, the Specialist CALD Peer Support Workforce in Greater Western Sydney would carry out recognised activities to support CALD consumers and carers that include:

- Practical assistance
- Education
- Information provision
- Referrals to people accessing services to support the recovery journey
- Development of individual recovery plans which incorporate self-identified recovery goals, aspirations, and strengths

SydWest MS would support its CALD Peer Support Workforce to engage in broader activities for the CALD community benefit including:

- Encouraging mental health literacy in CALD Communities
- Facilitating CALD community participation in regional Co-design and service planning
- Raising CALD awareness of pathways for career/training opportunities to enter the mental health workforce

As every peer support worker is a 'change agent,' through supporting personal change in CALD help-seekers the CALD Peer Support Workers will also change the culture and practice of the mental health service it comes into contact with.

The provision of the Specialist CALD Peer Support Service will be an effective response to addressing the low level of mental health service utilization and high level of mental health needs in CALD communities, and is aligned with key policy priorities recommended within:

- The Draft National Mental Health Workforce Strategy (2021)
- The National Mental Health Commission's Lived Experience Guidelines (2021)
- Greater Western Sydney's PHN/LHN Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plans
- NSW's Living Well in Focus 2020-2024
- The NSW Strategic Framework and Workforce Plan for Mental Health (2018-22)

Proposed Operating Model and Structure

The CALD Specialist Peer Support Workforce includes the following attributes:

- A fully paid employment model staffed entirely by CALD lived experience community members
- Oversight and governance provided by a dedicated CALD Advisory Group
- A training and working model that will see CALD people skilled with the capability to be gatekeepers embedded throughout the local community
- A co-designed CALD community engagement framework that leverages SydWest MS deep connections and linkages with communities
- Broadly accessible to CALD communities. The service will be designed to maximise coverage for a wide range of CALD demographics and remove barriers to accessing preventative mental health interventions locally
- The development of a culturally responsive and safe ecosystem of mental health service providers where CALD help-seekers could potentially be referred
- Flexible roster of CALD consultants to provide like for like case management by cultural background and mental health concern (i.e. depression, eating disorder, suicide prevention)

Figure 1. Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Specialist Peer Support Workforce – **CALD delivery and governance** supported by **SydWest Multicultural Services infrastructure and stability**

CALD Specialist Peer Support Workforce (N=17 FTE)

SydWest Multicultural Services Infrastructure		
CALD Advisory Board		
CALD Peer Support Manager		
CALD Peer Support Advocate		
Western Sydney	Nepean Blue Mountains	South Western Sydney
Senior CALD Worker	Senior CALD Worker	Senior CALD Worker
CALD Peer Worker	CALD Peer Worker	CALD Peer Worker
CALD Peer Worker	CALD Peer Worker	CALD Peer Worker
CALD Peer Worker	CALD Peer Worker	CALD Peer Worker
CALD Minority Culture/Concern Consultants	CALD Minority Culture/Concern Consultants	CALD Minority Culture/Concern Consultants
CALD Communities		

Why This Partnership?

The Partnership between SydWest Multicultural Services and the Greater Western Sydney PHNs/LHNs provides an unprecedented opportunity to bring together authentic collaboration between those with cultural knowledge, expertise, and connection within CALD communities locally, and those delivering mental health services at a regional level to extend outreach, and to improve access and service utilization.

Table 2. **SydWest Multicultural Services strengths align with Greater Western Sydney PHN/LHN priorities** for mental health service provision that benefit multicultural communities

PHN/LHN Priorities	SydWest MS Strengths
Investigate the specific mental health and service needs of people from diverse community groups	SydWest's understanding and connections reach deeply into CALD communities
Equip the community with the knowledge and resources needed to promote the individual and community wellbeing	SydWest has effectively promoted public health advice throughout the pandemic and addressed CALD specific needs during times of confusion, fear and uncertainty
Co-design new services and initiatives which are culturally relevant and responsive	Cultural competence and effective consumer engagement are closely linked. SydWest has the foundations of trust and respect in CALD communities to facilitate information exchange to improve system and service quality
Explore opportunities to invest in workforce and training to improve engagement with people from diverse communities and responsiveness of service providers	SydWest's proposed Specialist CALD peer support workforce will extend the reach of mental health services out to multicultural people in CALD communities
Develop partnerships to improve communication with multicultural and refugee specific services	A key strategic objective of SydWest is to enhance the voice of the multicultural community in Greater Western Sydney
Grow the number of peer workers and invest in their training and skills development	SydWest has a trusted network of CALD Lived Experience to contribute to the emerging regional peer workforce

Service Phases

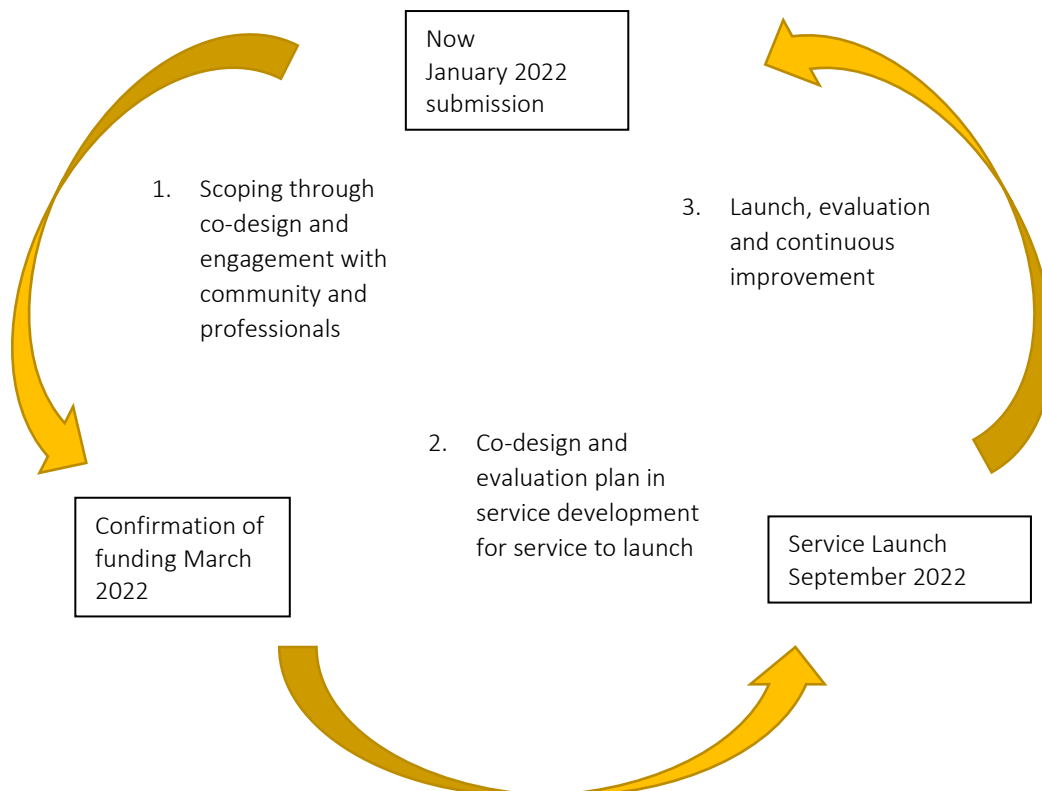
In addition to CALD governance and delivery, CALD co-design will be an important feature of the Peer Support Service Model. As part of every service phase SydWest MS will encourage CALD communities to participate in the design and evaluation of the service throughout its operation in Greater Western Sydney.

SydWest is committed to rigorous, systematic, and strategic evaluation to foster evidence-based decision making and a culture of continuous improvement. The importance of evaluation and using evidence from evaluations to guide our work is anchored in The Co-Design Cycle. In the Cycle, Co-Design is a process not an event.

The Co-Design Cycle includes the development of an evaluation plan during the service development phase. The evaluation process resulting from the plan will utilize data sources, feedback and advice from CALD community members, consumers/carers, the CALD peer support workers, clinical professionals and providers engaged with the service model at set periods and on an ongoing basis.

Success indicators will be Co-designed with CALD communities to determine the quality of SydWest’s service in a broad set of areas including suitability, accessibility, acceptance, ability, efficiency and cultural safety.

Figure 2. **In The Co-Design Cycle SydWest MS is in a key position to bring together CALD peoples and mental health professionals** to make continual improvements to the CALD Peer Support service model informed by evidence, expertise and lived experience.



Funding Request

This joined up approach to mental health service delivery between a Multicultural Service and PHN/LHN by a workforce entirely staffed by multicultural lived experience, represents an innovative opportunity to engage and care for CALD people experiencing distress before it turns into a crisis. This is a key element in moving Australia ‘towards zero suicide’.

Further benefits include:

- Providing employment opportunities for CALD communities
- Developing pathways for CALD peer workers into the mental health profession
- Building resilience and mental health literacy in CALD communities
- Facilitating community engagement in regional Co-Design and service planning
- Supporting the cultural upskilling of mental health professionals providing services

The following investment would enable delivery of the entire scope of the service described in this submission. SydWest MS submits that this pilot investment request could be replicated and scaled State-wide and Nationally, to meet CALD needs outside of Greater Western Sydney.

SydWest MS is a member of the NSW settlement consortium providing State-wide coverage with 11 migrant resource centres and several other migrant-specific services. There is potential for the best practice developed in this service model partnership to be scaled up in NSW through this or a similar coordinating mechanism, and for CALD Peer Support Workers to be represented by SydWest MS in the new National and possibly State peak coordinating bodies.

Table 3. Budget for CALD Specialist Peer Support Workforce in 3 PHN/LHN Areas of Greater Western Sydney serving approximately 841,464 CALD peoples (37.7% of Greater Western Sydney’s population)

Activity	FY 22/23	FY 23/24	FY 24/25	FY 25/26	Total Request
Implementation and Staff Training	\$1.86 m	\$1.86m	\$1.86m	\$1.86m	\$7.44m
Operating Cost	\$93,000	\$94,400	\$95,800	\$97,200	\$380,000
Promotion and Community Engagement	\$145,000	\$145,000	\$130,500	\$130,500	\$551,000
Service Evaluation and Enhancement	\$55,000	\$55,000	\$35,000	\$35,000	\$180,000
Total Request	\$2.153m	\$2.154m	\$2.121m	\$2.122m	\$8.551m

SydWest Multicultural Services

sydwestms.org.au
Phone: 02 9621 6633

Blacktown Head Office

Level 2
125 Main Street
Blacktown NSW 2148

Mt Druitt	Penrith	Rouse Hill
Level 1 13 Cleeve Close Mt Druitt NSW 2770	Office temporarily closed Open for business by appointment only	Vinegar Hills Community Centre 29 Main Street Rouse Hill Town Centre NSW 2155