

# Research Summary: Stakeholder Interviews

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Curtin University



## The issue

Western Australia (WA) has the highest proportion of people from migrant and culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) backgrounds of all Australian jurisdictions. Migrants from CaLD backgrounds experience unique challenges which increase their risk of housing precarity, homelessness and mental health issues (for more information, refer to [Research Summary: Rationale on Migration, Housing and Health](#)). This research aimed to inform service provision and policy approaches to increase access to secure housing and improve mental outcomes for migrants from CaLD backgrounds. This aim was pursued by exploring service provider experiences and perspectives of the systemic and structural issues impacting on service provision and perceptions of the needs of migrants from CaLD backgrounds in this context.

## What did we do?

We conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with service providers (n=11) from housing and homelessness, welfare and support, mental health and advocacy services. The research was guided by an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) methodology which is a qualitative methodology useful for examining lived experiences. Using this qualitative methodology, the current research aimed to inform service provision and policy approaches to increase access to secure housing and improve mental outcomes for migrants from CaLD backgrounds vulnerable to or experiencing homelessness and social isolation, focusing on policy, practice and research.

## We asked two broad research questions

What are the experiences of service providers working with migrants from CaLD backgrounds in the social services sector?

How do service providers make sense of and understand the needs of migrants from CaLD backgrounds in this work?

## Socio-demographic characteristics of participants

Female (n=8);  
Male (n=3)

Self-identified as from CaLD  
background (n=6);  
No/not stated (n=5)

Housing & homelessness (n=7);  
Welfare & support (n=1);  
Mental health (n=2);  
Advocacy (n=1)

Works predominantly with people  
from CaLD backgrounds (n=6);  
Not predominately (n=5)

## Key findings

Results from the interviews identified five key themes:

Themes	Sub Themes
<b>1) Common threads and recurring issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1) Multiple vulnerabilities and compounding intersections</li> <li>1.2) Housing as priority, place and security</li> <li>1.3) The limitations of language</li> <li>1.4) Trauma permeate experience</li> </ul>
<b>2) The dissonance of CaLD identity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.1) The vexed nature of 'CaLD'</li> <li>2.2) Tailoring or mainstreaming</li> <li>2.3) Individualised approaches</li> </ul>
<b>3) Fighting to be seen</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3.1) Eligibility and invisibility</li> <li>3.2) Creating visibility in social services</li> </ul>
<b>4) Complexity, confusion and the illusion of choice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4.1) Finding a way through</li> <li>4.2) The illusion of choice</li> </ul>
<b>5) The dichotomy of government and non-government supports</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5.1) Government failure</li> <li>5.2) The non-government safety net</li> </ul>

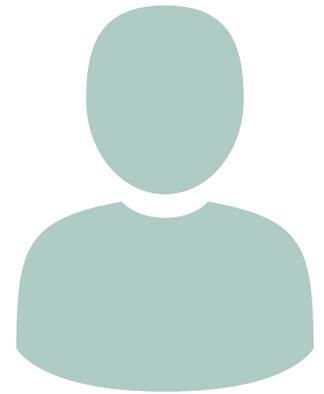
## 1 Common threads and recurring issues

The challenges faced by migrants from CaLD backgrounds present common threads of experience and recurring issues. Participants reported that migrants from CaLD backgrounds experience multiple vulnerabilities which could intersect and compound, and several specific issues emerged as central and pervasive, including factors related to: **housing; employment; income; language skills; mental health; alcohol and other drugs; family and domestic violence; and trauma.**

**Discrimination and racism** were also commonly cited as being part of the shared experience of migrants from CaLD backgrounds. Participants described both **systemic- and individual-level discrimination and racism** being at play.

### Snapshot of intersectionalities:

*"Yeah. So, say single parents, typically female, around four children, roughly four or five, low income, Centrelink dependent, low to medium English. Sometimes requiring an interpreter sometimes not. Not working. Not well supported by the community or locally. Yeah, that's kind of it in a snapshot." (Anna, employed with a housing program)*



## 2 The dissonance of CaLD identity

Participant narratives revealed dissonance in perspectives on the definition and sense-making of 'CaLD' terminology. They were **more likely to apply person-centred, individualised approaches**, as opposed to ways of working which reflected an understanding of 'CaLD-specific' cultural and other considerations.

Participants also noted that **migrants from CaLD backgrounds are not a homogenous group**. While the utility and meaningfulness of 'CaLD' terminology were questioned, there was a clear notion amongst participants that services specific to the needs of migrants from CaLD backgrounds were valuable and necessary.

*"People from CaLD background? Look, I think that when we apply the word when we apply the acronym CaLD, yeah, we've got to limit it in terms of the number of years that people are, from the date they've arrived in Australia. Because you can't continue to use that CaLD acronym through a person's life. It's just not, it's just not, right." (David, housing).*

### 3 *Fighting to be seen*

Participants regularly noted that services, systems and policy approaches in Australia served to make migrants from CaLD backgrounds ineligible and invisible, with implications for their sense of place and belonging in Australia, and for service provision in the non-government sector.

*"And actually, people are invisible to that system, like if you're sleeping rough, you're not visible to the housing system because you haven't done the housing application. You don't have your ID, and, so you're not seen as an unmet need. So the job of workers is to make people visible to those systems." (Lisa, housing).*

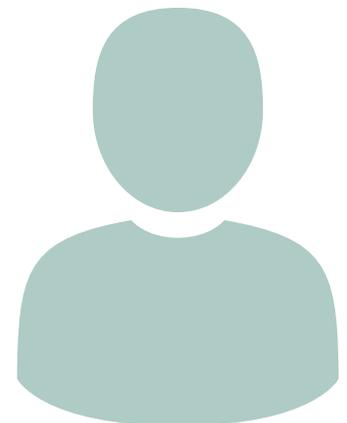
#### **Loss of identity, dignity and hope for the future were associated with experiences of ineligibility:**

- Ineligibility for services slowly leading to invisibility in the social service sector and society in general.
- Lack of Centrelink eligibility and restrictions due to visa status.
- Active outreach identified as key approach for use by service providers to address invisibility.

### 4 *Complexity, confusion, and the illusion of choice*

Overwhelmingly, the experience of participants working with migrants from CaLD backgrounds in the social services space was characterised by a sense of complexity and confusion, with service providers and their clients alike finding systems and processes difficult to navigate.

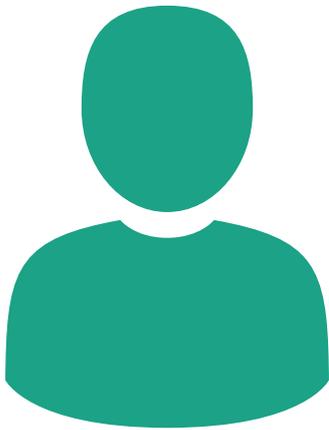
*"Again, just a lot of the forms and the paperwork that expected for people to fill out, get overwhelming for a lot of people. Yeah. And if they don't follow up with things like if you're on priority housing, you're supposed to let them know and give them an update at least every 12 months. Otherwise, you can be removed from the priority waitlist. You know, people aren't aware of this, or they don't understand this. Or if they're transient, then they can get dropped."*  
(Felicity, housing)



## 5 *The dichotomy of government and non-government supports*

While the issue of navigation in a complex and confusing social service system was repeatedly identified, a related but discrete themes emerged, pointing to the nature and impact of the social service system more generally and **the interplay between the government and non-government facets of this system.**

Participants regularly identified the negative impact of government-run social support systems on people from CaLD backgrounds leading to NGOs stepping in to support people from CaLD backgrounds who have been left behind by the system.



*"I think the, the message that people take away at the end, I mean, the people themselves, but also all of us around supporting them, is that we're going to make your life so difficult, you're not going to want to stay here. Which is, you know, awful and gut-wrenching." (Erin, welfare).*

*"...we're failing somewhere there. And it's hard to pinpoint exactly where but it creates, it's a lot of things, such as lack of resources, money, housing, workers, time, programs. It's just a lot of things, really. We're all kind of running around putting band aids on things. But Band-Aids fall off. And then the sore reappears. And then another one, and then another one." (Anna, housing).*

### So what?

In the context of housing and homelessness, mental health and other social determinants, participant accounts revealed complex experiences for both services providers and the migrants from CaLD backgrounds with whom they work. The issues and challenges identified have considerable public health significance. There are a range of practical implications for policy, practice and research which can contribute to improved service and housing access and enhanced social and health outcomes, for migrants from CaLD backgrounds.

**Action is needed in policy, practice and research to better address the needs of migrants from CaLD backgrounds in relation to housing, homelessness and mental health, with roles for government, the non-government sector, researchers, and migrants CaLD backgrounds. See the following page for recommendations.**

## Recommendations:

### *Policy:*

- Develop comprehensive strategies at the government level to specifically address the provision of housing as a priority for migrants from CaLD backgrounds. Strategies should focus on actions to address social determinants, service access issues, and more responsive housing and accommodation options, incorporating the application of a socio-ecological model.
- Address perceived and real power imbalances between government and NGOs in the social services and health sectors, to ensure that NGOs can work to their full capacity and support the needs of migrants from CaLD backgrounds.
- Address eligibility and visibility issues, it is recommended that policy change is implemented at a federal level to make the process for recognition of qualification of migrants from CaLD backgrounds more accessible and streamlined.

### *Practice:*

- Address family and domestic violence and to provide education to communities and to service providers in the WA context.
- Fund education and training in trauma-informed approaches and service provision by the government and make this training available to community-based NGOs and government services working with migrants from CaLD backgrounds.
- Develop information about social and government services to be made available in a wider variety of languages and widely accessible in a range of formats including online and via other media such as radio.
- Implement cultural awareness and competency training for frontline workers in government settings and in community-based NGO services, with support from government to fund these initiatives to increase capacity in mainstream services to support migrants from CaLD backgrounds.

### *Research:*

- Implement genuine consultation, involvement and collaboration processes to guide future social and NGO service provision for migrants from CaLD backgrounds.
- Fund further research to understand the needs of migrants from CaLD backgrounds living in regional, rural and remote areas in relation to housing, homelessness and mental health, to inform service and policy approaches.
- Fund further research to explore the feasibility and effectiveness of models that address discrimination in the housing sector, with a focus on landlords.
- Fund further research to understand effective models of outreach for migrants from CaLD backgrounds in relation to housing, homelessness and mental health.