

Domestic and Family Violence Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

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Education, Arts and Communities Committee
Queensland Parliament
Parliament House
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Brisbane QLD 4000



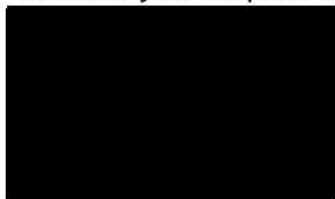
Dear Committee Secretary,

Re: Submission to the Domestic and Family Violence Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

Please find the submission from the Islamic Women's Association of Australia Ltd (IWAA) in response to the *Education, Arts and Communities Committee's inquiry into the Domestic and Family Violence Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025*.

IWAA represents culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women and has extensive experience supporting survivors of domestic and family violence. Our submission examines the Bill through a CALD lens, providing detailed recommendations that highlight challenges faced by CALD communities, drawing on case studies and lived experience to ensure the legislation effectively addresses their specific needs, promotes cultural safety, and strengthens protections for victim-survivors.

We appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this important inquiry and welcome the Committee's consideration of our views. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information.



Yours faithfully,
Figen Senyucel
DFV Manager



IWA
Australia Ltd

Submission

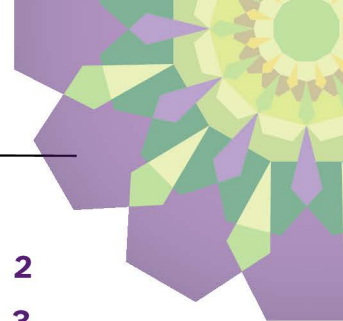
to the Domestic &
Family Violence
Protection & Other
Legislation Amendment
Bill 2025

Prepared By :

Figen Senyucel

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SUBMISSION TO THE EDUCATION, ARTS AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE DOMESTIC
AND FAMILY VIOLENCE PROTECTION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
2025

Date: 14 May 2025

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1. Executive Summary

The Islamic Women's Association of Australia Ltd (IWAA) supports the Domestic and Family Violence Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 ("the Bill") for its aim to strengthen protections for victim-survivors, particularly culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women and children affected by domestic and family violence.

Domestic violence disproportionately impacts CALD communities, who face unique barriers such as language difficulties, cultural stigma, and migration-related challenges that often restrict access to support and safety. While IWAA welcomes the intention behind the Bill's provisions, we highlight potential impacts and provide recommendations to ensure effective practical implementation, so CALD communities are not further disadvantaged and receive culturally appropriate, equitable, and effective protections.

Drawing from IWAA's direct experience and case studies, this submission underscores systemic challenges CALD women face in police interactions and court processes, including risks of traumatisation and misrepresentation. To address these, the Bill must incorporate culturally safe practices and dedicated resources such as specialist multicultural DFV liaison officers and disaggregated data collection, ensuring reforms truly meet the needs of CALD communities.

IWAA urges the Queensland Government to prioritise cultural responsiveness as a foundation of the Bill's implementation, enabling safer, more accessible, and effective protection for some of the most vulnerable victim-survivors in our society.

2. Introduction

2.1 About IWAA

The Islamic Women's Association of Australia Ltd (IWAA) is a leading community organisation dedicated to supporting culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) across Queensland. Established over 30 years ago. Established in 1992, IWAA is a not-for-profit organisation that has grown from its roots in settlement services to encompass aged care, the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), community development, domestic and family violence support, and Palestinian support projects.

Previously self-funded for several years, IWAA is the first organisation in Queensland to operate a specialist CALD appropriate refuge to provide temporary accommodation to women and children from CALD backgrounds escaping domestic and family violence. On top of short term refuge accommodation our DFV specialist team also provides case management mobile support and culturally safe, trauma-informed services aimed at empowering women and children affected by domestic and family violence (DFV). Our expertise lies in bridging systemic gaps for CALD communities, where language barriers, cultural stigma, and complex migration-related challenges frequently exacerbate experiences of violence and isolation.

This submission examines the Domestic and Family Violence Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 ("the Bill") through a culturally appropriate lens. While acknowledging the Bill's positive intent to enhance victim protections and strengthen perpetrator accountability, IWAA emphasises that cultural responsiveness must be central to its implementation for the reforms to be successfully utilized within CALD communities. We present key recommendations to ensure that CALD women and families can access equitable benefits from these legislative reforms.

2.2 Domestic and Family Violence in CALD Communities

Domestic and family violence (DFV) is a pervasive issue affecting all segments of society; however, women and children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds experience unique and heightened vulnerabilities. A substantial body of research, including the Queensland Government's Not Now, Not Ever report (2015), as well as studies by the Australian Human Rights Commission (2023) and other national inquiries, highlight that DFV in CALD communities is often underreported, under-recognised, and compounded by intersecting cultural, linguistic, and systemic barriers.

Key findings from this research reveal that CALD victim-survivors face:

- **Language and Communication Barriers:** Limited English proficiency and lack of access to qualified interpreters hinder effective communication with police, legal systems, and support services, resulting in misunderstandings and inadequate protection measures (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2023).
- **Cultural Stigma and Shame:** Deeply ingrained cultural norms around privacy, family honour, and gender roles can prevent victims from seeking help. Fear of ostracism or retaliation within tight-knit communities often leads to silence and isolation.
- **Distrust and Fear of Authorities:** Historical experiences of discrimination, systemic racism, and unfamiliarity with Australian legal and social systems foster mistrust towards police and courts, deterring CALD women from reporting abuse or engaging with protective mechanisms (Douglas & Nancarrow, 2022).
- **Migration-Related Challenges:** Visa insecurity, financial dependency, and lack of social networks can be exploited by perpetrators, making CALD women more susceptible to prolonged abuse and less able to access refuge or support (National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children, 2022).
- **Underutilisation of Protective Orders and Services:** Due to systemic gaps and cultural disconnects, CALD women often face difficulty obtaining and enforcing domestic violence orders and accessing culturally safe, trauma-informed services.

The Not Now, Not Ever inquiry recommended a multi-layered response, emphasising the necessity for cultural competence in frontline services, improved interpreter provision, community engagement, and tailored support programs. The Australian Human Rights Commission's 2023 research further stresses the importance of incorporating digital literacy and multilingual resource

2.3 Background to the *Domestic and Family Violence Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025*

As we understand it, the Domestic and Family Violence Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 ("the Bill") is designed to strengthen protections for victim-survivors of domestic and family violence (DFV) in Queensland and to enhance the accountability of perpetrators. The Bill proposes a number of key reforms including:

- Expanding Police Protection Directions (PPDs) to allow frontline police to issue immediate and extended protection directions administratively, reducing reliance on courts for urgent safety measures.
- Introducing electronic monitoring for high-risk perpetrators to provide an additional layer of safety for victims.
- Enhancing victim engagement and support within the court system to ensure survivors' voices are heard and their safety needs are prioritised.
- Improving information sharing and coordination across agencies involved in DFV response.

These reforms aim to provide quicker, more effective safety measures and a more victim-centred justice system. The Bill builds on previous inquiries and consultations, which identified critical gaps in the current legislative framework, especially around timely protection and support for victims.



3. Police Protection Directions (PPDs)

3.1 Overview of PPD Amendments

The Bill introduces significant reforms to the Police Protection Directions (PPDs) framework under the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012. These amendments empower frontline police officers to issue immediate and extended protection directions administratively, without the need to initiate court proceedings in the first instance. This approach is designed to try and provide timely safety interventions, reduce procedural bottlenecks, and enhance responsiveness in domestic and family violence (DFV) cases. By enabling more efficient protective action, the proposed changes seek to mitigate risk to victim-survivors during the critical early stages following a DFV incident.

3.2 Police Response Delays in Domestic and Family Violence Cases

Timely police intervention is one of the most critical factors in preventing escalation and long-term harm in DFV situations. However, substantial research and frontline experience indicate that delays in police response remain a persistent barrier to effective protection—particularly for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, who already face compounded vulnerabilities.

A Queensland Police Service (QPS) review acknowledged that operational pressures, resource constraints, and procedural complexity frequently lead to delayed responses in DFV matters. These delays heighten the risk of repeat or escalating violence and significantly undermine victim-survivors' confidence in law enforcement. This is especially concerning for CALD communities, where mistrust in police and fear of authority may already be prevalent due to prior trauma, visa insecurity, or differing cultural experiences with law enforcement.

Several key studies support these observations:

- A **2021 study by the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse** found that CALD victim-survivors often experience longer wait times for police attendance than non-CALD individuals. Delays are frequently linked to the unavailability of on-demand interpreter services, which can stall triage and decision-making at the dispatch level.



- The **Lowitja Institute's National Survey (2020)** reported that CALD women expressed widespread dissatisfaction with police response times and frequently perceived a lack of cultural understanding and empathy. Many participants highlighted fear of misidentification or not being believed, further deterring help-seeking.
- The Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC, 2019) affirms that delays in police response are strongly associated with increased injury severity and escalation to fatal outcomes. Their evidence review concluded:

"Delays in police attendance have been associated with an escalation in the severity and frequency of violence, often resulting in more serious injuries or even death. Rapid intervention reduces the opportunity for violence to continue or escalate, underscoring the critical importance of timely police responses."

[1]

Furthermore, the **2023 ANROWS** report examining the intersection of DFV and police responses in multicultural settings revealed that misidentification of the primary aggressor remains a significant concern, particularly for CALD women who may not speak English fluently or whose trauma responses are misinterpreted as aggression or noncompliance. In some cases, victim-survivors were inadvertently criminalised due to misunderstandings during the initial police contact.

3.3 IWAA's Response to the Police Protection Direction (PPD) Reform

IWAA welcomes the intent of the proposed amendments to expand the use of Police Protection Directions (PPDs) as a tool for swift and accessible protection. The reform rightly recognises that early intervention is one of the most effective strategies for preventing escalation of domestic and family violence (DFV). However, we are concerned that, in practice, the reform may not achieve its intended effectiveness.

The key issue we observe is that although the reform grants expanded powers to police, frontline officers are often already overburdened and stretched thin, raising concerns about whether these additional responsibilities can be adequately managed in practice.

[1] Australian Institute of Criminology. (2019). *Domestic and family violence in Australia: An overview of the evidence (Research Report No. 23)*. Canberra: AIC. Retrieved from <https://www.aic.gov.au/publications/sr/sr23>

From our direct experience supporting women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds who are victim-survivors of DFV, we see firsthand how administrative and procedural delays often result in loss of trust in the justice system, further marginalisation, and in some tragic cases, increased harm.

3. 4 Case Study 1: Delayed Police Response

The following case from Salam Safe House (SSH) highlights how delays in police response, combined with systemic and cultural barriers, can lead to the misidentification and further marginalisation of CALD women experiencing domestic and family violence

During a crisis, our worker was on the phone with a client when the person using violence (PUV) forcibly broke down a locked door, leading to a violent altercation. Recognising the immediate danger, our worker urgently called the police for assistance.

The call was made at 2 pm, but police did not arrive until nearly six hours later, closer to 8 pm. Despite the urgency and clear risk to the client's safety at the time of the call, the police response was significantly delayed. This critical delay placed the client at further risk and heightened her sense of vulnerability and fear.

By the time police arrived, the altercation had ended, and the client was unable to disclose the details of the incident. Meanwhile, the PUV provided false information to the police, misleading them about what had occurred. The police encouraged the client to leave the premises because the PUV's name was on the house title, effectively resulting in the client becoming homeless. This response failed to prioritise the client's safety and overlooked the power dynamics at play.

This case underscores the real-world challenges CALD women face in accessing swift and effective police protection, even under the expanded Police Protection Direction reforms. Such delays not only increase the risk of physical harm but also damage survivors' confidence in seeking help, potentially increasing their isolation and danger.



3.5 Challenges, Safeguards, and Key Recommendations for CALD Women

IWAA recognises the intention behind expanding Police Protection Directions (PPDs) as a means to improve safety and expedite protection for domestic and family violence (DFV) victim-survivors. However, we hold serious concerns that such reform—if introduced prematurely without proper workforce capacity and cultural safeguards—may place CALD women at greater risk of harm, misidentification, or exclusion from protection.

Women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds already face systemic barriers in engaging with police and the justice system. The expansion of police powers without first addressing these structural issues may deepen mistrust, retraumatise victim-survivors, and lead to unintended negative outcomes.

IWAA therefore urges the Queensland Government to prioritise the strengthening of the current DFV response system before expanding PPD powers. Key steps include:

1. Increase Police Resourcing and Culturally Competent Training

- Boost the frontline police workforce to ensure sufficient time and capacity for accurate risk assessment and trauma-informed responses.
- Mandate comprehensive training in cultural competency, anti-racism, trauma-informed practice, and DFV dynamics in migrant and refugee contexts, to ensure equitable responses for CALD women.

2. Guarantee 24/7 Access to Accredited Interpreters

- Interpreter access must be embedded at all stages of the response process, not just at the point of issuing a PPD.
- Prohibit the use of unqualified individuals such as family members or community leaders in interpreting roles, especially during crisis.

3. Prevent Misidentification Through Culturally Responsive Protocols

- Develop co-designed risk assessment tools for CALD communities in collaboration with multicultural DFV services.
- Introduce a mandatory supervisory review before any PPD is issued in cases involving CALD individuals.



4. Recruit CALD Female Officers and Liaison Staff

- Invest in targeted recruitment and training of CALD female officers or DFV liaison officers, who can provide culturally appropriate support and build trust within diverse communities.

5. Community Engagement and Public Education

- Public awareness of rights and processes under PPDs must be communicated in multiple languages, using trusted CALD channels.
- Ongoing engagement with community and religious leaders is essential for culturally appropriate education and to reduce fear or misconceptions around police involvement.

6. Data Collection and Monitoring

- Disaggregated data collection and independent monitoring are necessary to ensure CALD communities are neither over-policed nor under-protected, and to identify trends in misidentification or barriers to access.

3.6 IWAA Position

At this time, IWAA does not support the expansion of PPD powers without first ensuring the police workforce is adequately resourced, culturally competent, and supported by structural safeguards. Strengthening the existing DFV response framework, including workforce training and CALD-specific protocols, must be the priority. Any expansion of police powers must be preceded by robust consultation with multicultural communities and service providers, and informed by evidence of reduced harm and increased access to protection for CALD women.

3.7 Case Study 2: Misrepresentation of CALD Women

The client, a woman of Indian background, faced a serious risk of misrepresentation during her first disclosure of severe domestic and sexual violence. The person using violence (PUV) presented as calm and collected, while the client—traumatised and visibly hysterical—was in extreme emotional distress. The PUV had fabricated a narrative alleging that the client was suicidal and harassing him, which shaped initial police perceptions.

Cultural stigma, fear of police, and prior trauma contributed to the client's reluctance to speak openly. When two male police officers attended, her fear escalated further due to previous experiences of abuse by men.

DV Connect contacted Salam Safe House (SSH), and a staff member met with the client prior to the police interview. The SSH worker provided emotional support, built trust, and explained the importance of full disclosure in a culturally safe and respectful manner. Without this intervention, the client would not have disclosed the abuse.

With SSH's support, the client revealed— for the first time—extensive violence, including physical, sexual, emotional, financial, and visa-related abuse. The Queensland Police Service (QPS) assessed her as high risk and issued a Domestic Violence Order (DVO) in her favour with strict no-contact conditions.

This case highlights the critical role culturally informed support services play in preventing misidentification and enabling appropriate police responses. Without SSH's involvement, the client's distress and hesitation to speak may have resulted in the PUV being incorrectly identified as the victim—an outcome that continues to occur far too often.



4. Electronic Monitoring Pilot for High-Risk Perpetrators

4.1 Overview of Electronic Monitoring (EM)

The Bill introduces a pilot program for the electronic monitoring of high-risk domestic and family violence (DFV) perpetrators. This includes GPS tracking of perpetrators and the provision of wearable safety devices for victim-survivors. These devices are designed to enable real-time alerts, immediate emergency contact, and improved responsiveness to breaches of protection orders.

4.2 IWAA'S Response to Electronic Monitoring Innovations

IWAA supports the introduction of technology that enhances victim-survivor safety and promotes accountability among high-risk perpetrators. When implemented appropriately, electronic monitoring can deter breaches of protection orders and provide CALD women—many of whom live with heightened fear of retaliation and are often reluctant to report breaches for fear of further harm.

IWAA supports electronic monitoring (EM) as an innovative safety tool because it offers a least intrusive, practical alternative to more restrictive measures such as immediate removal orders or incarceration of perpetrators. For many CALD victim-survivors, electronic monitoring can:

- Enhance safety without requiring victim relocation or immediate court intervention, which can be especially challenging for women with complex immigration or family circumstances.
- Reduce ongoing trauma by minimizing direct confrontations with perpetrators, providing a buffer that allows victims to regain a sense of control and security in their daily lives.
- Offer real-time protection and early warnings, enabling rapid responses to breaches, thereby preventing escalation of violence.
- Provide flexibility and dignity to victim-survivors, who may face cultural or social pressures around separation or family disruption, by supporting safety while maintaining family connections where appropriate.
- Empower victims through technology, enabling immediate access to emergency support without relying solely on police presence, which some CALD women may distrust or hesitate to engage with.

In these ways, electronic monitoring devices represents a proactive, victim-centred approach that balances safety with respect for cultural sensitivities and personal autonomy, making it a promising innovation for diverse communities.

4.3 Case Study 2: Mobile Support, Duress Alarm and Surveillance Cameras Used to Enhance Safety

IWAA provided mobile outreach support to a client from an Iraqi background who remained in the family home after the person using violence (PUV) was exited following a domestic violence incident. Although the immediate threat had been addressed, the client remained highly anxious, particularly after several unidentified individuals were observed approaching the property—raising fears that the PUV was attempting to intimidate or monitor her through third parties.

Despite staying in the home, the client felt unsafe completing daily tasks such as answering the door, going outside, or sleeping. These fears were compounded by cultural pressures, language barriers, and past trauma.

Following the development of a personalised safety plan, IWAA arranged for the installation of external security cameras on the property to provide visual monitoring and deterrence. A personal duress alarm was also provided and linked to a 24/7 external security provider. This gave the client the ability to trigger an immediate emergency response if she felt unsafe.

A bicultural worker delivered culturally sensitive, in-language training on how to use the alarm and understand its limitations. The combination of visible surveillance, mobile caseworker support, and immediate response capability helped the client regain a sense of safety and control while remaining in her home.

This case demonstrates how layered safety strategies, such as duress alarms and home security enhancements, can effectively support CALD victim-survivors who choose to remain in their homes. If the PUV had been fitted with an electronic monitoring device, the client would have felt an even greater sense of security, knowing that any breach of proximity conditions would trigger an immediate alert. This additional layer of protection could have further alleviated her anxiety and enabled her to regain a sense of control with confidence. Together, electronic monitoring and victim-centred safety measures represent a culturally responsive and less intrusive alternative to more disruptive interventions, such as relocation.



4.4 Evaluation of Tasmania's Electronic Monitoring Trial

In 2017, Tasmania launched Project Vigilance, a pilot program for electronic monitoring of high-risk family violence offenders. The trial aimed to assess the effectiveness of GPS tracking devices in reducing violence and improving victim safety. An evaluation by the Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies (TILES)[1] found a 78% reduction in serious violent offences committed by participants wearing electronic monitoring devices. The study also reported a substantial decrease in high-risk breaches of protection orders, underscoring the potential of electronic monitoring to enhance victim safety and improve perpetrator accountability.

This success prompted the Tasmanian Government to pass the Family Violence Amendment Bill 2024, which broadens the use of electronic monitoring to include perpetrators on bail, further strengthening protections for victim-survivors. The legislation, coupled with over \$100 million investment in family violence prevention, reflects a comprehensive approach to community safety and offender management.

When considering this, IWAA is very hopeful that the success of Tasmania's electronic monitoring trial can serve as a model for broader implementation. The significant reductions in violent offenses and breaches demonstrated in the trial highlight the potential for electronic monitoring to provide CALD victim-survivors with increased safety and peace of mind. IWAA advocates for culturally responsive, victim-centred approaches that incorporate electronic monitoring as part of a layered safety strategy, ensuring that survivors receive both protection and respect for their unique cultural and personal circumstances.

[1] Winter, R., Herrlander Birgersson, E., Julian, R., Frey, R., Lucas, P., Norris, K., & Matthewson, M. (2021). *Evaluation of Project Vigilance: Electronic Monitoring of Family Violence Offenders*. Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies (TILES), University of Tasmania. Retrieved from <https://www.police.tas.gov.au/uploads/Final-TILES-Report-V.2-Project-Vigilance.pdf>



4.5 Operational Considerations for Electronic Monitoring Alerts

While electronic monitoring (EM) devices provide valuable real-time alerts to potential breaches of protection orders, there are important operational questions that need to be addressed to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of such measures:

- **Police Response Protocols:** It remains unclear how law enforcement agencies will respond to alerts triggered by EM devices. Immediate police action for every alert may not be feasible, particularly in regions with limited resources or high demand on emergency services.
- **Resource Implications:** The potential increase in calls and emergency responses could place additional strain on police resources. This raises concerns about whether current police capacity can manage frequent alerts without compromising other critical duties.
- **Risk of Alert Fatigue:** Frequent or false alerts might lead to desensitization among responding officers, potentially reducing the urgency or seriousness with which alerts are treated, thereby compromising victim safety.
- **Victim Impact:** Uncertainty around police response times and effectiveness of intervention after an alert could contribute to ongoing anxiety for victim-survivors, potentially undermining the sense of security EM devices aim to provide.



5. Expansion and Streamlining of Video-Recorded Evidence-in-Chief (VREC)

5.1 Background: Current Legal Framework and Challenges

Currently, many Magistrates Courts allow for evidence-in-chief (the initial testimony of a witness) to be recorded on video to reduce the need for victims to give live evidence repeatedly. However, this practice is not uniformly available across all courts or cases, resulting in inconsistencies that can prolong legal processes and increase distress for victim-survivors. For many domestic and family violence survivors, particularly those from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, navigating the court system presents substantial challenges.

5.2 Challenges for CALD Victim-Survivors in Court

For CALD women, the legal process can be daunting due to language barriers, limited understanding of the Australian justice system, and cultural differences. Research indicates that a significant proportion of domestic violence victims in Australia come from CALD backgrounds, often facing isolation and limited access to culturally appropriate support.

The current court and police evidence systems, with their complex and adversarial processes, can unintentionally compound trauma. For CALD women, these procedures are frequently intimidating and confusing, leading to fear, anxiety, and a reluctance to engage. Without trauma-informed and culturally responsive supports, the justice system risks retraumatizing those it seeks to protect, and undermining CALD women's confidence in seeking safety and accountability.

5.3 The Court Structure and Systematic Trauma

- **Adversarial Proceedings:** The adversarial model pits parties against each other, requiring victim-survivors to face cross-examination, which can feel like re-victimization, especially for those unfamiliar with legal norms.
- **Repetition and Delays:** Multiple court appearances and lengthy delays force survivors to repeatedly recount traumatic events, increasing emotional distress and the risk of disengagement.
- **Cultural Insensitivity:** Lack of cultural safety—including limited interpreter access and absence of culturally aware support—can alienate CALD survivors, who may feel misunderstood or marginalized in court.



- **Power Imbalances:** Factors such as immigration status, social isolation, and unfamiliarity with legal procedures compound feelings of intimidation and disempowerment.
- **Unwelcoming Environment:** Formal, sterile courtrooms are often intimidating and lack privacy, triggering anxiety and discomfort for trauma survivors.

5.4 Importance of VREC in Reducing Trauma

Video-recorded evidence-in-chief (VREC) allows victims to pre-record their testimony in a safe, supportive environment. This reduces the need for multiple live court appearances, limiting exposure to adversarial questioning and public scrutiny. VREC helps to:

- Minimise re-traumatization by avoiding repeated recounting of abuse.
- Allow testimony in a culturally sensitive, less intimidating setting.
- Facilitate participation for women with caregiving or transportation challenges.
- Support interpreter services and culturally appropriate advocates during testimony

5.5 IWAA's Opinion on the Expansion and Streamlining of VREC

While the use of Video-Recorded Evidence-in-Chief (VREC) is already permitted, it remains significantly underutilised—particularly in cases involving CALD victim-survivors. IWAA supports the more effective and widespread use of VREC as a critical measure to reduce traumatisation, improve participation in legal processes, and enhance safety for CALD women experiencing domestic and family violence. Its consistent and culturally safe application must become standard practice across the state.

The traditional court system often retraumatizes survivors through repeated, adversarial questioning in unfamiliar and intimidating environments. This experience is intensified for CALD women due to language barriers, cultural differences, and the absence of culturally safe support. These factors frequently discourage CALD survivors from fully engaging with the justice process or pursuing protection orders.

The use of non-adversarial interview processes through Video-Recorded Evidence-in-Chief (VREC) presents a critical opportunity to deliver a victim-centred, trauma-informed approach that upholds the dignity and safety of CALD survivors. By enabling testimony to be recorded in a supportive environment and used in court proceedings, VREC reduces the need for repeated appearances and eliminates direct confrontation with perpetrators. This significantly lessens psychological stress and fosters greater engagement with the justice system—particularly for those who may otherwise be deterred by its adversarial nature.

To maximise benefits for CALD survivors, IWAA emphasises that VREC must be implemented alongside:

- Fully funded, qualified interpreters available throughout all stages of legal proceedings to ensure accurate communication.
- Access to culturally appropriate support persons or advocates who understand the survivor's cultural background and can assist in navigating the court system.
- Training for legal and court personnel in cultural safety and trauma-informed practices to foster a respectful and understanding environment.
- Flexible VREC options, including remote access, to accommodate women with caregiving responsibilities, transportation challenges, or other systemic barriers.
- IWAA advocates that these measures be integral to the implementation of VREC to ensure CALD victim-survivors receive fair, respectful, and culturally responsive justice.

5.6 Courts to ensure consistency and equitable access

- Fund Interpreter and Support Services: Fully resource interpreters and culturally appropriate support persons throughout proceedings.
- Training for Legal Personnel: Provide cultural safety training for all court and legal staff to improve sensitivity and understanding.
- Flexible VREC Options: Develop remote and flexible VREC procedures to accommodate women with caregiving responsibilities or transportation barriers.
- Ensure Cultural Safety: Embed cultural considerations into VREC procedures to make the process accessible and respectful for CALD victim-survivors.



5.7 Case Study

A client presented to IWAA from a Samoan background, with limited life skills and three young children under five. She faced significant challenges engaging with the court system due to language barriers, cultural unfamiliarity, and caregiving responsibilities. Fearful of retaliation, she was often reluctant to attend court hearings.

On one occasion when she did attend, the person using violence approached her and pressured her to withdraw her statements, increasing her anxiety and risk. With our advocacy, she was able to continue with the court system; however, the process was extremely stressful, traumatising, and difficult to manage alongside the needs of her young children.

This is not an isolated case. Many CALD women face high levels of fear, cultural pressure, and intimidation, which are magnified in the court environment. Without protective measures like VREC, women are often forced to choose between safety and justice.



6. Conclusion

In conclusion, while the Domestic and Family Violence Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 represents an important step forward in enhancing protections for victim-survivors, it must be implemented with a clear focus on the unique needs of CALD communities. Without culturally responsive approaches, dedicated resources, and systemic reforms informed by lived experience, the Bill risks perpetuating existing barriers and inequalities faced by CALD women and children. IWAA calls on the Queensland Government to embed cultural safety and equity at the heart of this legislation's rollout to ensure all victim-survivors can access timely, effective, and respectful support and justice.

