

Urgent need to strengthen multicultural community liaison officer capacity

A joint statement from 32 organisations across Northern NSW representing community organisations, legal centres, and service providers

RAPID GROWTH IN CALD POPULATION ACROSS NORTHERN NSW

Northern NSW has experienced significant growth in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities. Between 2011 and 2021 the:

- overseas-born population across the region increased by 93%
- proportion of residents speaking a language other than English at home more than tripled
- proportion of residents arrived in Australia in the previous five years more than doubled
- demand for health care interpreter services increased by 89%

Census year	Overseas born*	% of population speaks language other than English at home *	% population arrived in the last 5 years *	Health care interpreter requests**
2011	54,321	0.3-1.3%	0.7-1.8%	15,462
2016	75,625	0.5-1.6%	1.3-2.6%	22,129
2021	105,032	1.0-4.0%	2.2-3.7%	29,216

* Figures retrieved from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021): SA4 regions 102, 104, 106, 108, 110, 111

** Figures provided by Hunter New England Local Health District – Multicultural and Refugee Health Service, including requests of clinical data from HNELHD, CCLHD, MNCLHD, NNSWLHD

LIMITED MCLO CAPACITY

Multicultural Community Liaison Officer (MCLO) capacity across Northern NSW has not kept pace with rapid population growth, limiting community outreach and culturally safe policing.

Only two MCLOs are designated to cover all police districts north of the Hawkesbury River through to the Tweed region; insufficient for the size and geographic spread of the population.

As both officers are male, CALD communities lack access to a female MCLO, limiting gender-responsive engagement with women experiencing domestic and family violence.

IMPROVING MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

We call on the NSW Government to:

- increase the number of MCLOs in Northern NSW, with a minimum of one MCLO per district
- ensure at least half of the MCLOs are female to support gender-responsive engagement
- appoint female MCLOs in high-demand districts where there are currently only males – Newcastle and Coffs Harbour

Without strengthened MCLO capacity there is a risk of reduced community trust, weakened prevention strategies, delayed intervention, and long-term unmet community safety needs.



ENDORSED BY THE FOLLOWING ORGANISATIONS ACROSS NORTHERN NSW

Community and cultural organisations



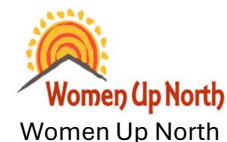
Community legal centres



Multicultural service providers



Women and domestic violence services



Government service providers

