



# ACHRH

Empowering Communities  
through Knowledge & Research

## ACHRH Newsletter

February  
2016

### IN THIS ISSUE

## Hello to all our friends

It seems like some time ago that we last communicated in our newsletter - remember that by following the ACHRH on Facebook, you can be kept informed and up to date by a reliable source on the important issue of family violence which affects us all in some way.

We hope all our friends have had a safe and joyful holiday period – much of Australia grinds to a halt when it gets hot. Or wet. Or when we have three gazetted holidays close together. Put all three elements together and you get a lot of things slowing down!

In this newsletter, you can read three articles by Dr O'Connor, on work being done by the ACHRH both here and in India. She has also written a very interesting piece on the importance of the ACHRH's Mutual Cultural Respect workshop programme.

Gauri has contributed a piece on the subsequent MCR report launch held in early December.



**Manjula  
O'Connor**

### IN THIS ISSUE...

#### Natak Vihar

... is a new community participatory theater project that seeks men's participation to explore their vision and solutions to stopping family and domestic violence. A flyer appears in this newsletter with all the information you need

#### See No Evil, Hear No Evil, Speak No Evil

... is a piece written by Dr O'Connor on the issue of dowry in multicultural Australia.

#### Capacity Building in India

Read about a program supported by the ACHRH in the dalit village of Jheeram Pura.

#### And more on the MCR workshop programme

# See No Evil, Hear No Evil, Speak No Evil - Dowry in Multicultural Australia

Dr Manjula O'Connor

See No Evil, Hear No Evil, Speak No Evil is a strategy adopted by many in relation to the cancer that is dowry related domestic violence and dowry related murders in multicultural Australia. Dowry defined as gifts given or taken in the context of a wedding that are multiple times the annual income of families is alive and well in Multicultural Australia. At least two murders related to dowry demands have come to light. A Chinese mother-in-law was sent to jail for murdering her daughter-in-law as she wanted a dowry of about half a million dollars whereas she received only about \$250,000. The second case is of an Indian woman Deepshikha Godara. Domestic violence started at the hands of mother-in-law, husband, and his uncle the day after marriage. The reason- her father gave half a million Rupees (\$10,000 approximately) to her husband to be, an Australian-Indian citizen on the day of the arranged marriage in India. The groom's father demanded more but as her father did not have more to give emotional and physical abuse began on the first day of the marriage; perpetrated by husband and his family. After a couple of IVOs she finally decided to leave him. But he killed her and killed himself.

This evil that is dowry is kept in place by the powers of society, held largely by men. Men say 'ah, but it is the mothers-in-law who are greedy and demanding'. Careful analysis reveals that she is actually acting on behalf of the men in her life. She is rewarded with special privileges if she stays complicit—privileges like public respect, awards, money, and prestige. If she speaks out against the custom she will be ostracised, no one will want to marry her daughters and she will be shunned by society.

Dowry is different to ordinary gifts. Gifts given are within the means of the giving family. It is the greed for exorbitant amounts of cash that is creating the cancer that is gender power imbalance and inequality. Boys and men are rewarded, mothers with male babies are rewarded while those women pregnant with female babies are forced to abort, beaten, even thrown out of the family home. This bestows a sense of entitlement among men. It was noted by Coroner Ian Grey in Sargun Ragi's murder inquest. Mr Singh he said was motivated by a 'culturally entrenched' attitude of 'male entitlement'.

The daughter on the other hand is a losing proposition. The parents educate her, invest emotional energy but unless they give dowry she cannot get married. If the Indian groom happens to be a resident of USA, Canada, Australia, UK much the better, he will command dowry in millions and billions. Dowry has become a status symbol. The rich want to show off their wealth by giving big dowries and the middle and lower socioeconomic classes feel the burden to copy the rich. Is it then a surprise that female babies in India are constantly aborted and female infanticide is a problem? This has given rise to an abnormal male to female sex ratio where males predominate. Is it happening in Australia? The answer is YES, and is provided by Christopher Guilмото, UN gender expert. He says Indian and Chinese communities combined account for a "missing 1400 female foetuses" between 2003 and 2013. Between the decade studied (2003-2013) the sex ratio was 105.7 males per 100 females for Australia as a whole. For Indian born parents the ratio was 108.2 boys per 100 girls, and for Chinese-born parents, average of 109.5 boys were born for every 100 girls.



***Hundreds of thousands of Rupees in cash are gifted to Australian-Indian grooms as dowry***

In Ugandan and Middle-Eastern communities of Australia it is the groom who pays dowry to the bride's father. It is economical abuse, the pressure to gift thousands of dollars before they start their new life is unfair burden.

**We don't realize the damage dowry is doing to us, we are all willing participants in this harmful tradition, not out of choice, but because we are silenced, suppressed, scared and subservient. We see no evil, and when we see it we do not want to speak of this evil. Silence cannot go on, silence must be broken.**

## What are we doing about it in Australia?

A petition was initiated by our Centre in 2013. It has been signed by 650 people, largely the Indian community and has been tabled in the Victorian Parliament on three occasions, the first two times by The Former Premier of Victoria The Hon Ted Baillieu MP in 2014 and the third time by Heidi Victoria MP on the White Ribbon Day 26 November 2015. The petition asks the Victorian Government to amend Family Violence Protection legislation, and add dowry demands as an example of Family Violence. Such legislation will help to break the silence and complicity with domestic violence that is associated with demands for money, gold, expensive gifts by the Groom's family as in India & South Asia and by the Bride's family as in some Middle-Eastern & African cultures. This legislation will also help to focus our attention on education process for the public, the police, the courts and importantly the Faith leaders in eradicating this evil that is the dowry system.

## **Dowry devalues girls and women whether it is given or taken.**

A strong media campaign has taken place since 2013 in raising awareness around this issue in Australia.

A submission to the Royal Commission on evils of Dowry by our Centre has made a strong recommendation to legislate against dowry in FV Protection Legislation 2008. Family Law courts need to take note of the amount of dowry given when making judgments. Our Centre has begun discussions with Family Law Court officials.

# ACHRH Supports Capacity Building in an underprivileged Village of North West Delhi, India - Jheeram Pura

By Dr Manjula O'Connor

A recent visit to Australia by Indian MP Dr Udit Raj through the India Exchange Forum has helped to establish strong connections between Melbourne Indian Diaspora and New Delhi political class.

In my recent visit to New Delhi, I met with MP Dr Udit Raj. ACHRH will join the Indian exchange Forum support capacity building of a village under his constituency. The village is under privileged due to caste issues, The Village is Jheeram Pura and an NGO will start setting up self-help groups for men and women; women empowerment and legal education will be some of the goals. The NGO will be supported financially by ACHRH, and will work under the direction of Dr Udit Raj. The NGO Ray Trust will send two workers who will set up camp and stay there for the next 12 months.

of males. The villagers work as farm labourers. Most young people under the age of 20 are educated to class 8 to 10 and the mature women are largely illiterate. The men and women are not aware of the various beneficial schemes offered by the Government of India to support the under-privileged and the so-called lower castes. The rate of substance abuse is high and domestic violence and dowry problems are common.

The NGO will open an office where following groups will occur -Self-help groups, women's empowerment groups, facilitation of further education of young women and men in TAFE Colleges, awareness raising regarding their rights, domestic violence awareness, laws against dowry and female feticide and how to best use legal agencies including the local Police officers help.

ACHRH will mentor the officers of NGO Ray Welfare Trust with the blessings of the office of MP Dr Udit Raj. This NGO will encourage the parents to educate their girls, to encourage equal share in property division, entrepreneurship among women. But first it will survey the whole village with a house to house questionnaire to elicit basic data on income, education, level of domestic violence, and attitudes to women's role in the home and equal rights and house work, dowry etc.

A community based awareness raising on domestic violence and dowry related problems will also be supported by ACHRH.



*Young woman at home in Jheeram Pura*



*Typical home in Jheeram Pura*

Jheeram Pura is located 50 km North West of Delhi and about one hour drive from the City. The total number of inhabitants is 520 approx. Majority are males 220, with lesser number of women 190 and 120 inhabitants are under 16 years. There is preponderance



*Women listening to men discussing the location of public toilet with Dr Udit Raj MP's team member*

# Australia Needs Mutual Cultural Respect Training

Article based on the summary of Evaluation Report prepared by Clare Keating

*Cologne mayor blasted for advice to women after assaults* (The Age dated January 7, 2016). On New Year's Eve, about 90 alleged sexual assaults and one rape are understood to have been perpetrated by men of Arabian and North African appearance. The Mayor Ms Reker, has been accused of victim-blaming when she advised "women keep a certain distance from strangers on the street and remain within groups to avoid being singled out". Immigrants from countries with little freedom for females need support and information to better integrate with the society and the culture of their newly adopted country. This applies to both men and women. Our research has found migrant women who become more accustomed to freedom are at risk of domestic violence (O'Connor and Colluci 2015). There is also a need for cultural awareness and respect by the locals for the culture of migrants. The Victorian Government's multicultural festivals and events funding grants help to achieve familiarity and respect for multicultural traditions and festivals. The migration experience brings with it a complex combination of losses and opportunities. The migrant leaves their homeland, family and friends, the familiarity of cities and towns, traditions and culture. Migrants arriving in Australia can access a range of supports during their settlement period, such as language training. But there are few opportunities for migrants to learn about the new culture and legal system they are entering, or more particularly about where and how culture and legal matters may intersect.

The Australasian Centre for Human Rights and Health (ACHRH) identified this gap and successfully applied for funding under the Department of Social Services' Families and Communities Programme to design and deliver a program titled 'Mutual Cultural Respect'<sup>TM</sup> (Rachel Klienman. The Age Culture awareness training for new migrants 5/12/15). The objectives of the training are to sensitise the migrants to Australian cultural expectations of respectful behaviour towards, and equality of, women, build respect and tolerance for cultural differences, build knowledge of, and respect for the rule of law and the intersection between the law and the culture. In response to these issues, and supported by a large body of research World Psychiatric Association suggests that acculturative stress is correlated with anxiety and depression, especially in the first months of arrival, and more so if prejudice and discrimination is commonplace. Mutual Cultural Respect training - 212 migrant participants on every type of visa and belonging to 37 ethnicities took part. It uses Adult Learning Principles and can be delivered to participants with varying levels of English language competence. Following quotes from the participants testify to the successful accomplishment of goals. '(learnt) Comparison (of) culture between our own country and Australia, in friendship expectation, domestic cultures and driving licence': 'Cultural dialogue on all sides useful for all'; 'Cultural differences, biggest challenges to face in Australia'; 'Culture backgrounds, religion and laws in our country and other countries to be considered'; 'I came to know about things like something normal in one culture may be totally unacceptable/different in other culture'.

We recommend the Federal Government adopt this program for all new immigrants and refugees.

In Finland and Norway a program similar to 'Mutual Cultural Respect' for its new migrants is recently implemented. It is important for Australia also to assist and support its new migrants to settle into their new home by some kind of social and cultural training

## Further reading

O'Connor Manjula & Colluci Erminia. Exploring Social and emotional distress in Australian- Indian migrants. 11/1/ 2016 .Journal of Transcultural Psychiatry.

## Support Us

ACHRH is an NGO and as such relies heavily and extensively on the mission partners and the wider community for support. If you would like to support us and get involved in any way then please do contact us, either via the website:

<http://www.achrh.org/>

Or Facebook (click the image to follow the link):



find us on  
**Facebook**



# MCR Evaluation Report

By Gauri Kapoor

On Wednesday 9 December, the Hon Kevin Andrews MP launched ACHRH's Mutual Cultural Respect (MCR) Evaluation report. MCR is an interactive workshop which raises awareness of key issues that affect migrants and international students as they transition to life in Australia. The pilot program was funded by the Department of Social Security under Mr Andrews's leadership. Several distinguished guests were present for the evening event which was held at the Lyceum Club. ACHRH Chairman, Prof Ian Howie was the Master of Ceremonies. Eight speakers presented an excellent analysis of the program designed and implemented under Dr Manjula O'Connor's visionary leadership.

Leaders from a diverse range of organisations came to show their strong support for MCR. Friends of ACHRH including the Victorian Multicultural Commission, the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, White Ribbon, Our Watch, Oorja Foundation, the Turkish, Afghan and Chinese women's associations and the National Council of Women (Vic) were represented. Senior officials from the Department of Social Security and the Department of Immigration were also present at the launch.

Prof Howie began by outlining the key achievements of ACHRH in its first three years of existence. The organisation has worked tirelessly to support vulnerable migrants, international students and victims of domestic violence in the South Asian diaspora. ACHRH has continued to lead a campaign against dowry and it will soon launch a community theatre research project with men titled Natak Vihar. Prof Howie praised Dr O'Connor's strategic planning and her dedication to women in need of help both in Australia as well as in India.

Former Government advisor, Rick Brown, guided Dr O'Connor as she designed the MCR program. He spoke of the need to have such a broad cultural awareness or sensitisation program for new migrants which can complement the current citizenship test. Mr Brown believes the MCR case studies will 'fill the gap' by conveying necessary legal, social and cultural requirements to migrants and international students who would otherwise not be exposed to such important information. People have the chance to converse with others and speak openly about typical difficulties or dilemmas that arise during their migrant experience.

Dr O'Connor explained the background and rationale behind MCR which was developed in 2010 following the murder of Indian student, Nitin Garg, and the subsequent discussion of problems faced by international students in Melbourne. Over the years, she has observed many young migrants and international students who were struggling to understand or relate to cultural experiences in Australia. Most notably, young men were unfamiliar with gender etiquette and often interpreted a woman's friendly nature as sexually inviting. Some felt unabashed staring was acceptable behaviour towards women. Dr O'Connor developed MCR with the intention of making the process of integration easier for both migrants and the Australian community.

Some of the 212 facilitators and participants who participated in the program were in attendance to share their reflections and provide their first-hand account of the program. Representatives from the Victorian Institute for Culinary Arts and Technology, the Royal Dental Hospital of Melbourne, Indian Senior Citizens Association of Victoria, Molina Asthana, Dr Wendy Mason and Dr Norma Sullivan provided interesting insights. They all agreed that discussing various hypothetical situations had helped them to better understand what the 'Australian way of life' means and how cultural differences can lead to complex situations. In her presentation, the author of the report, Clare Keating, reported a high percentage of participants across different cultural backgrounds and of all different ages had experienced feelings of alienation well into the post settlement phase. After completing the MCR workshop many felt more confident in their ability to navigate social norms in an Australian context. Participants also appeared to be better informed as to where and how to access support.

Mr Andrews, the former Minister for Immigration and Guest of Honour for the evening, remarked on how after leaving a portfolio, MPs rarely get to see the end product of work that had begun during their tenure. He was impressed by how well the project had evolved. Mr Andrews spoke of the difficulties migrants face in terms of settlement in a western society. In doing so he alluded to Samuel Huntington's clash of civilisations theory and reiterated the importance of cross cultural dialogue in today's world.

Overall the launch of the report was a great success and another indication of the great progress made by Dr O'Connor and the rest of the team at ACHRH.





*Images from the MCR report launch.  
A night enjoyed by all!*



# You are invited to the launch

The Australasian Centre for Human Rights and Health invites you  
to the launch our community participatory theatre.

NATAK VIHAR (Sanskrit phrase meaning Theatre Space) uses theatre to explore and propose solutions to Family Violence, a common problem in all communities, irrespective of race, religion, education and geographical location.



**When: 25 FEBRUARY THURSDAY**

Time- 1 pm – 2 pm

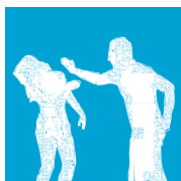
**Where:**

VICTORIAN PARLIAMENT  
Federation Room, First floor

You are invited to launch **Natak Vihar (theatre space) for South Asian communities**. Drama will be created to reveal culturally sensitive strategies that can strengthen families and prevent family violence from occurring.

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## How will it work?



This project will be led by men; they will take an active role in producing stories for drama. Women will also participate.

The community audience will be asked to interact with the stage performance and give voice to solutions. Moderated expertly by Theatre Director Dr Rosemary Blight, key conversations will be recorded and analysed. This is action research.

*This project is funded by the Indian community and the Victorian Multicultural Commission, and has received ethics clearance by The Melbourne Clinic Research Ethics Committee.*





## WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

- 
- **POLICE IN EMERGENCY -- 000**
- 
- **YOUR GP -- they are helpful, easy to reach, they will refer you to the right place.**
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- **NATIONAL SEXUAL ASSAULT, DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE COUNSELLING SERVICE -- 1800 RESPECT**
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- **INTOUCH MULTICULTURAL CENTER AGAINST FAMILY VIOLENCE – 1800 755 988**
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- **WOMENS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CRISIS SERVICE (WDVCS) 24 Hour state wide line 1800 015 188**
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- **MEN'S 24 HOUR REFERRAL SERVICE 1800 065 973 (FREE CALL VICTORIA ONLY)**
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- **VICTORIA IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE WOMEN'S COALITION 03 9654 1243**  
virwc@virwc.org.au, www.virwc.org.au
- 
- **WOMEN'S INFORMATION & REFERRAL AGENCY (WIRE) 03 9348 9416**  
inforequests@wire.org.au
- 
- **DR MANJULA O'CONNOR, FOUNDING DIRECTOR ACHRH 03 9654 5271**  
manjula@achrh.org
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### WHY GET HELP?

- ❖ Domestic Violence damages our culture
- ❖ Domestic violence breaks our homes
- ❖ Domestic Violence causes:
  - Anxiety,
  - Depression,
  - Suicide,
  - Homicide in women, men and children

### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- ❖ Support those who may be victims
- ❖ Encourage victims to seek help and become survivors
- ❖ Encourage perpetrators to seek help
- ❖ DO NOT BE SILENT ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

*Say No to Domestic Violence*