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***AustralAsian Centre for Human Rights and Health Inc***

[www.achrh.org](http://www.achrh.org)

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**ACHRH**  
Empowering Communities

April 2021  
Newsletter

### **5th anniversary of the historic Victorian Royal Commission into family violence**

March 2021 was the 5th anniversary of the historic Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence report to the Victorian Government. The Report was revolutionary, it tackled the failures and gaps in the system. The Report showed the Governments and the communities a road map to better respond and prevent family violence in Victoria.

We the AustralAsian Centre had previously been working on dowry abuse issue in our community since 2012. We were proactive and started a petition that identified key issue that was causing family domestic violence in our communities. And that was dowry demands, extortion and associated abuse and violence, even murder in Australia. The petition signed by hundreds of community members was tabled twice in the Victorian Parliament by the Hon Ted Baillieu, the Former Premier of Victoria. ACHRH made substantial submission to provide evidence why dowry abuse must be included in the Family Violence Protection Act of Victoria, as an example of economical abuse.

I was present in the lockdown room when the report was tabled in March 2016. That was an electric moment for me! Much to our delight and surprise the ACHRH petition was restated and noted in the Recommendation number 156 paraphrasing it, the recommendation stated that dowry abuse be included in the Victorian Family Violence Protection Legislation. That was 2016.

What has happened since then has been something ACHRH is very proud of. Following milestones have been achieved.



- 1) Victorian Legislation passed in March 2019 unanimously in both houses to include dowry abuse as definition of family violence;
- 2) Second National Dowry abuse summit hosted by ACHRH in partnership with UNSW and co-hosted by number of organisations, in Sydney. February 2019;
- 3) Senate Hearing into the nature and practice of dowry abuse in Australia triggered by The Hon Julian Hill MP in 2018 and Report tabled in February 2019. There are 12 recommendations, including dowry abuse be included in Family Law Act;
- 4) National dowry abuse working group formed in March 2019 to progress the recommendations of the Senate Hearing Report;
- 5) Dowry abuse included in the 4th National Plan to reduce violence against women and children;
- 6) ACHRH in partnership with Harmony Alliance received \$495000 grant to create National platform for prevention of dowry abuse;
- 7) A national survey by ACHRH and Harmony Alliance targeted to the South Asian community identified the frequency of dowry abuse. 32% of participants said that either they have suffered dowry themselves and or they know someone who has suffered dowry abuse. That is 1 in 3 women of South Asian community nationally. It is a huge number;
- 8) The recent Federal Senate Report on Family Domestic Sexual Violence notes the ACHRH the pioneering role of ACHRH, and the coercive nature of dowry abuse and recommends Dowry abuse by included in Federal Family Law Act and harmonize the legislation on Family Violence across all the States.

A policeman recently had to take a perpetrator to court who had committed assault, rape within marriage, and dowry abuse-confiscated all her jewelry, having taken \$70,000 cash in India. The Policeman seemed unaware of the significance of dowry abuse. He asked me why dowry abuse is legislated. The simple answer is that dowry giving is part of South Asian custom of gift giving in a marriage. It becomes easily abusive and toxic because coercive demands for cash and gold jewelry, gifts hide considered culturally acceptable, and easily acceded to by the bride's family. So, the criminal gets away without facing justice. That is why it needs to be legislated in Australia, so the Police and the Judiciary know the trauma it causes the new bride, and the perpetrator gets proper punishment.

#### Where to from here

The frequency of dowry abuse is showing up in victims presenting to services very often. In my practice at least 49% of all victims presenting for mental health help have suffered dowry demands, cash, gold jewelry and none

of it is returned to the victim, after separation. Sometimes even within the marriage if she asks for her jewelry, she does not have access to it. In a national survey of South Asian community conducted by ACHRH and Harmony Alliance, 32% said they had suffered dowry abuse themselves or known someone who has. That is a big number.

#### **Honesty always helps**

**It is expensive to bring a new partner into the country and bear all their expenses.**

**One remedy I believe is that the grooms who go offshore to marry women of the Indian subcontinent should state it honestly and upfront that they need assistance from the bride's family for cash for visa, airlines ticket, before marriage and that should be taken as the bride's contribution to the future life. All wedding expenses after that should be shared equally.**

## **Donations to ACHRH are now tax deductible!**

Thank you for considering a gift to ACHRH, which will support our work to create happy and healthier communities; did you know that donations to ACHRH over \$2 can now be claimed as a tax deduction?

Since 2012, ACHRH has delivered a range of programs which tackle issues effecting migrant communities in Australia, with a particular focus in Melbourne and across Victoria. If you would like to be a part of making tangible impacts for at risk communities, please contact Kate Grimme on 0400 032 821 or email [info@achrh.org](mailto:info@achrh.org) We will be pleased to provide you with more information on how you can make a financial contribution and to share details on the programs and projects we run.

Donations can also be made via our PayPal Giving Fund - <https://www.paypal.com/au/fundraiser/charity/4028349>

# Self-confidence and why is it a necessary tool to have?

By: Dr Manjula O'Connor

You perhaps know that Improving Self-Confidence improves your chances of success in personal, social life and professional life

## Key features of self-confidence

- You feel in control, and self-assured in company. you do not dominate conversations.
- You do not need to control other people.
- Self-confidence gives you energy and ability to enjoy life.
- Self-confidence makes it easy to make decisions.

## **Role of self confidence in healthy intimate relationship**

*A self-confident person does not need to control their partner, they do not need to dominate their partner, or isolate them from their friends and family, or use their income for their advantage. A self-confident person does not feel jealous. They are likely to trust their partner because they feel secure within themselves.*

Self-confident person does not manipulate the other person or undermine their partner in life or business. A self-confident person sits down and communicate openly their concerns. She or he can quickly identify when they are being bullied or abused and take actions to protect themselves.

A Self-confident person inspires other people, they tend to invite trust and respect. On the other hand, overconfidence and arrogance is not helpful. Overconfident people may not recognise their shortcomings and may not give themselves the opportunity to learn from others. As Buddha said middle ground in life is the path to true happiness.

## **Tools to Build Self-Confidence**

Bandura has identified four sources of improving the use of self-confidence in life, a tool also known as self-efficacy or effectiveness in life.

**Developing Mastery.** It is important to get success. Start with a small project that you know you can win. Assess your knowledge, skills, and abilities. Take on jobs that are within or just above your abilities. The project should be challenging, but not too much. It will bring confidence. And that breeds future success. But easy wins and unearned rewards do not increase confidence. It must be your own hard work that will increase confidence. But always be mindful of others and not be overconfident.

Success provides positive motivation. When you succeed reward yourself with positive statements and reflect on your skills that led to the outcome

**Learn from others.** Watch successful people who are more like you. If you view yourself as similar to someone else, and you see his or her accomplishments, you're likely to apply that to yourself, and believe that you can achieve similar success. If you see others working hard and succeeding, that can also motivate you. It is useful to network with people you admire or are successful. Look for a mentor with similar background.

**Manage Stress.** Stress is harmful for mind and body. Learn to identify stress. Sleep disturbance, inability to settle into a job, anxiety, depression, distress, loss of confidence are some features. Bodily symptoms may be headaches, loss of weight, excessive eating and use of alcohol and drugs. Stress makes you feel negative.

Learn to manage stress. It will increase confidence. Yoga, mindfulness, daily exercise, learn to do problem solving. You feel positive about yourself when you learn how to control stress in your life. If stress feels out of control, please see your GP who can determine the next best step for you.

**Learn to be optimistic.** Some people are optimists, and some people are pessimists. You have heard of glass half full or glass half empty type thinking. Optimistic people tend to take on bigger risks and that increases their confidence. Try to see the obstacles that come your way not as failures, but as challenges that you can solve and learn from. It will make you more confident to take on new things.

### **Dowry Abuse Prevention workshops -- Call out to community workers and leaders.**

[Harmony Alliance](#) and the [AustralAsian Centre for Human Rights and Health](#) have been funded by the Australian Government to run a series of community workshops on preventing dowry abuse in Australia.

The workshops with community members are to take place from July 2021 to July 2022 across the country, either in person or online.

We are looking for people interested in facilitating workshops with community members on the drivers of dowry abuse, what dowry abuse may look like in reality and what can be done to prevent it.

A training session will be held.

We would like each facilitator to organise **at least three** community workshops and recruit **a minimum of ten participants** per workshop.

Facilitators' will be paid and all associated costs such as venue and catering, or subscriptions for Zoom will be covered by Harmony Alliance.

If you are interested in being a workshop facilitator, please email Amanda Lee (Project Officer) - [amanda.lee@migrationcouncil.org.au](mailto:amanda.lee@migrationcouncil.org.au) by **COB, Friday 23 April 2021.**

# INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 8 March 2021

By: Dr Manjula O'Connor

**ACHRH celebrated** wonderful IWD on 8 March 2021. It was held in partnership with Indian Women in Australia, South Asian Community Link Group and Ethnic Women. The event was attended by 170 gorgeous women and yes there men too -a dozen great men.

Our guests of honour were the Minister for Multicultural Affairs Ros Spence and Shadow Minister Neil Angus. Both our guests spoke about the contribution of the strength of combination of work with alliance of 4 organisations and the contribution of Indian women and society to Australia.

I spoke about how to measure your self confidence level and why positive confidence is good for success and how to increase it. Please see summary of my speech in this newsletter

Many thanks to the South Asian women, Reena Rani, Smiley Sandhu, Mr Deepak Vinayak, Dr Raju Adhikari, and to Ms Rashi Kapoor for holding the event together as an accomplished MC. Thanks also to Epping Reception Centre and Mr Narinder Garg for hosting the event.



# Coercive Control Campaign

By: Gauri Kapoor

**ACHRH has joined a growing campaign** to support the criminalisation of coercive control in Australia. This campaign for change has its roots in NSW but is now gradually gaining traction in Victoria as well.

The murder of Dr Preethi Reddy in 2019 sparked increased media attention on the impact of coercive behaviours in relationships. Ever since then, there is for the first time a serious and continuous public discourse occurring in regards to this problem in Australia and whether or not its criminalisation would be an appropriate step. It is a timely discussion coming amidst the backdrop of a renewed and more intense focus on a range of factors relating to women's safety inside workplaces, at home and in public spaces.

A Parliamentary Committee Inquiry in NSW is currently considering written submissions and oral hearings from family violence practitioners, academics and legal experts to "inquire into and report on coercive control in domestic relationships". You can find a link to ACHRH's submission below. Key matters the Committee is to explore includes what constitutes coercive control, what would be the consequences of legally recognising it and conversely what are the possible risks should it not be recognised by law. Feasibility in relation to implementation of a potential law has been a central, recurring theme. A key question is whether coercive control would be legally demonstrable as a stand-alone offence. The Inquiry's deliberations have involved examining precedents set by coercive control legislation in England and in Scotland. Committee members will also no doubt have much to learn from the findings of lawmakers in Hawaii who have spent the past month debating whether coercive control should be recognised in domestic violence cases. It seems likely Hawaii will soon become the first US state to criminalise coercive control.

Benefits and limitations have been outlined by various service providers around Australia. Some activists are wary about the implications this type of criminalisation may have for indigenous Australians both in a legal context and in a wider policy making context. Another concern that has been repeatedly raised is around what effect such a move could have on those at the receiving end of this kind of abuse. Most activists and stakeholders strongly feel however a clear legal sanction must exist against behaviour that involves a combination of and repeat abuse in all its forms - physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, financial. They see a gap in the law that does not take into account a holistic assessment of debilitating patterns of abuse present over the course of a relationship.

ACHRH's Executive Director, Dr Manjula O'Connor, is advocating for the criminalisation of coercive control through a graded punishment / response system. You can find a link to her article below. ACHRH agrees with partner organisations who also argue criminalisation should be accompanied by extensive community education particularly for migrant and refugee communities. Coercive control is an under-recognised and more complex form of family violence in certain CALD groups. Funding and resources will be required to facilitate effective education programs.

In 2021, ACHRH plans to continue raising awareness about the importance of achieving appropriate legal recognition of coercive control with a particular focus on identifying its prevalence in dowry abuse cases.

ACHRH's submission to the NSW Inquiry - [Submission - 4.pdf \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)

[Why coercive controlling behaviours need to be understood and named - Dr Manjula O'Connor - ACHRH](#)

# The Crossroads to Community Wellbeing working group

The Crossroads to Community Wellbeing working group was formed in 2018 in response to concern raised by a local police sergeant about the suicides of several South Asian women over a short period of time in the local government area of Whittlesea. Member organisations include local government, Victoria Police, community health organisations, family violence services, legal and community services.

The working group has assessed that social isolation is a risk factor for South Asian women living in the City of Whittlesea and that family violence as well as other isolating and controlling behaviours may also be contributing factors. This assessment was reinforced by recent findings by the Victorian State Coroner's investigation into four of the deaths\*.

Contributing factors to the risk of suicide for South Asian women do not only affect women in the City of Whittlesea but are part of a broader issue. It is anticipated that the working group's ongoing advocacy for systemic change to address some of the issues that affect South Asian women living in Whittlesea will have an impact at state level.

In 2021 the working group will continue to advocate for change to improve the wellbeing of South Asian women living in the Whittlesea local government area and will develop ways for the broader community to be involved in guiding what those changes need to be through, for example, community focus groups.

\*The Coroner's findings regarding the four investigated deaths are dated 7 September 2020 and are publicly available. The findings necessarily include details of the method of suicide, however when discussing suicide it is preferable not to refer to such details. This is to avoid sensationalising the issue or causing additional distress.

If this information has raised concerns about yourself or someone you know, or caused you distress, please consider seeking support:

## 24 x 7 helplines

- o Lifeline 13 11 14
- o Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467
- o 1800 Respect 1800 737 732
- o Harman Foundation 1800 116 675

## Other support services

- o IndianCare 03 8312 8805
- o InTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence 1800 755 988



## 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.**
- **NATIONAL SEXUAL ASSAULT, DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE COUNSELLING SERVICE -- 1800 RESPECT**
- **INTOUCH MULTICULTURAL CENTER AGAINST FAMILY VIOLENCE -- 1800 755 988**
- **WOMENS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CRISIS SERVICE (WDVCS)  
24 Hour state wide line 1800 015 188**
- **MEN'S 24 HOUR REFERRAL SERVICE  
1800 065 973 (FREE CALL VICTORIA ONLY)**
- **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**

### 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 Family Domestic  
Violence*