



Immigration Advice
and Rights Centre

**HELPING
PEOPLE
NAVIGATE**
| AUSTRALIAN
IMMIGRATION LAW

MEDIA RELEASE

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Urgent funding and law reform needed to keep migrant and refugee women safe in Australia

State and Federal Governments must take action on domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) now and commit to funding services that assist victim-survivors to leave or recover from unsafe relationships.

The Immigration Advice and Rights Centre (IARC) is having to turn away women experiencing DFSV every week, due to increased demand and funding cuts to its services.

“This means women from migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds are staying in violent or abusive relationships while they wait for legal advice. It is unacceptable and needs to end now,” Principal Solicitor Ann Emmanuel said.

IARC is a community legal centre with an established immigration service dedicated to assisting victim-survivors of DFSV.

“We have been warning governments and leaders for decades that proper funding and legislative changes are needed to keep women on visas safe in Australia,” Ms Emmanuel said.

“Now they are being turned away or forced to wait months for legal advice because community legal centres are in a funding crisis,” she said.

Over the past 12 months, funding for IARC’s DFSV work has been significantly reduced at a time when demand is the highest the service has ever seen. Referrals from frontline services alone are up 30% from last year. IARC is also facing additional DFSV funding cuts in June this year.

Ms Emmanuel says DFSV funding must be prioritised in upcoming State and Federal Budgets and the migration system needs urgent reforms.

“The Federal Government is currently considering changes to the migration system that would provide safe pathways for more victim-survivors on temporary visas to leave violent or abusive relationships. Those reforms need to be fast tracked,” she said.

“Insecure visa status is a barrier to victim-survivors seeking safety. Many women do not report violence or remain in unsafe relationships because they fear they could be placed in immigration detention or forced to leave Australia without their children.

“Victim-survivors need safe visa pathways now - lives depend on it,” Ms Emmanuel said.

IARC is calling for:

1. An immediate commitment from State and Federal Governments to allocate substantial, long-term funding to the domestic and family violence sector including frontline services, support organisations and community legal centres that assist victim-survivors to leave and recover from violent and abusive relationships.
2. The Federal Government to fast track immigration reforms that would provide safe and secure pathways and better protections for victim-survivors of DFSV on temporary visas.

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For more information or an interview please contact Communications Manager Sarah Sinclair on 0419 170 535 or sarah.sinclair@iarc.org.au.



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About IARC

IARC is a community legal centre (CLC). We are a non-profit that helps vulnerable people navigate Australian immigration law by providing free legal advice, information and casework services. Our clients are migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum. We provide expert legal services to our clients through three practice areas: Immigration and Domestic Violence, Visas and Citizenship and Visa Assist for Migrant Workers. Our team works with people who are experiencing multiple layers of hardship. Many of the clients we assist have experienced trauma and are financially disadvantaged. They also come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and some are members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

IARC has more than 35 years experience in migration law and policy. Our vision is for Australia's immigration system to be fair, just and accessible.