



# CQMA CALD WOMEN'S ADVISORY GROUP

<b>Project Period</b>	February - June 2025
<b>Project Amount</b>	\$11,000

## Executive Summary

The Central Queensland Multicultural Association undertook the Volunteer Management Activity (VMA) project with a strategic focus on embedding inclusive, strengths-based, and culturally safe volunteer practices into its core operations.

The project aimed to deepen engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, enhance volunteer leadership, and improve systems for training, induction, and governance.

CQMA formalised a dedicated volunteer subcommittee, co-developed a new Volunteer Handbook, and introduced a pilot CALD Volunteer Induction Framework to support inclusive onboarding.

Targeted consultation ensured that the needs and strengths of First Nations peoples, newly arrived migrants, and established multicultural communities were represented in the project design and delivery.



## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

**Creation of Terms of Reference for the volunteer subcommittee.**

**A review of existing induction materials, and an internal audit of governance practices.**

**These initiatives culminated in strengthened trust, more confident volunteer participation, and the establishment of a culturally inclusive model that can be scaled across regional Queensland.**

# KEY OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

## Volunteer Subcommittee and Governance Review

A dedicated Volunteer Subcommittee was formalised with a clear Terms of Reference outlining its scope, responsibilities, and accountability. The subcommittee, composed of multicultural leaders and volunteer representatives, met monthly to provide strategic oversight and community-informed advice.

This body successfully:

- Reviewed and endorsed the draft Volunteer Handbook.
- Guided the development of the CALD Volunteer Induction Framework.
- Identified systemic gaps in feedback loops and onboarding clarity.
- Facilitated conversations between volunteers and leadership, improving organisational transparency.



## CALD Volunteer Induction Framework

**14** Volunteers from non-English speaking backgrounds piloted the new induction model.

The framework included:

- A visual orientation guide with key steps and contacts.
- Buddy system pairing new volunteers with experienced peers.
- Translation and interpreter access during onboarding.
- Embedded cultural awareness activities.

Volunteers involved in the pilot reported increased understanding of CQMA's mission, improved confidence, and a stronger sense of belonging.

## Volunteer Handbook Development

CQMA developed a comprehensive Volunteer Handbook tailored to multicultural volunteers, integrating plain language, visual icons and real world examples.

The Handbook:

- Outlined rights, responsibilities, and reporting processes.
- Embedded cultural safety principles throughout.
- Provided practical guidance for volunteers navigating CQMA's services and expectations.
- Included a "Community Voices" section with quotes from existing volunteers.

The handbook was distributed in both print and digital formats and reviewed by community language experts for clarity and accessibility.

## Organisational Strengthening and Strategic Alignment

CQMA undertook a governance review to align board and volunteer policies with its multicultural mission.

Key actions included:

- Updating internal procedures to reflect inclusive language
- Rewriting board charters to clarify roles in volunteer oversight
- Linking volunteer metrics to organisational KPIs

This internal alignment helped ensure CQMA's values were reflected at every level of its operations, from executive governance to frontline service.

# INSIGHTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

## **Cultural Representation Is Not Cultural Safety**

Engaging CALD volunteers requires more than language translation—it demands active cultural listening, flexibility in systems, and shared decision-making. CQMA's success was tied to giving volunteers space to shape systems, not just participate in them.

## **Formal Structures Foster Inclusion**

The establishment of the Volunteer Subcommittee created a protected space for volunteers to speak up and for leadership to respond. This structure will remain integral to CQMA's volunteer strategy moving forward.

## **Visual Learning Aids Reduce Barriers**

The use of icons, infographics, and peer voice helped make induction materials accessible. Volunteers with limited English or formal literacy found these tools empowering.

## **Peer Support Increases Retention**

The buddy system was a small but powerful feature. Volunteers expressed appreciation for having a peer who could support their early questions and encourage ongoing engagement.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## **Expand the CALD Induction Framework**

Refine and embed the pilot framework into CQMA's permanent induction process. Develop multilingual video resources and expand the buddy system with formal training for mentors.

## **Continue Volunteer Subcommittee Engagement**

Maintain the subcommittee beyond the project life. Consider expanding its mandate to include cross-program input, event design, and annual planning processes.

## **Share Model Across Regional Multicultural Networks**

Package the Volunteer Handbook and induction model into a shareable toolkit for other multicultural service providers in Queensland, especially those in regional and rural areas.

## **Conduct Annual Policy Reviews with Community Input**

Build in structured annual reviews of all volunteer-facing documents, with participation from CALD volunteers, community stakeholders, and CQMA leadership.

# CONCLUSION

CQMA CALD's Women's Advisory Group project represents a transformative step in building a volunteer culture that reflects and serves its diverse community.

Through clear governance, co-designed resources, and culturally safe practices, CQMA has embedded inclusion into every layer of its volunteer engagement. Volunteers now report greater clarity, confidence, and connection to CQMA's mission.

Leadership is equipped with governance structures and tools that honour community wisdom. Most importantly, CALD community members feel seen, respected, and empowered to contribute meaningfully.

This work lays a replicable foundation for regional Queensland and offers a timely blueprint for inclusive volunteering in a multicultural Australia.

