

Meeting the Needs of Australian Muslim Families:

Exploring Marginalisation, Family Issues and 'Best Practice' in
Service Provision

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Will cover

- Research aims and questions
- Methods
- Findings
- Some dilemmas for service provision




Aims

- Understand the needs of Australian Muslim families
- Develop a 'best practice' model to address these needs.



Research Questions

Research questions...

1. What are the main concerns of Muslim families?
 2. What facilitates family resilience and participation?
 3. What positively/ negatively influences family relations?
 4. What are families' main coping mechanisms and help-seeking strategies?
 5. What 'support gaps' are perceived to exist?
 6. What would a 'model' service for this group consist of?
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Research Methodology

- Literature review
- Focus groups and interviews
 - Young people, parents, service providers, community members, religious leaders.
- Two research locations – Wollongong and Auburn
- Supported by key multicultural community service
- Community consultation

Research participants...

- All 'family' participants identified as Muslims n=75
- Diverse range of families
- Service providers/community leaders n = 26

Findings – Australian Muslim Community

- Extremely diverse community
 - Originate from Africa, middle east, Asia, Europe
 - Differ linguistically, culturally and religiously
 - Different migration experiences
 - Duration in Australia ranges from early 1970s to newly arrived.
- However
 - Vast majority identify as part of some sort of Muslim collectivity
 - Religion tends to play an important part in their lives and religious institutions are significant
 - Since 9/11 feel threatened by media.




Further considerations

- Challenges shared with many other migrant groups
- Difficult to separate religious, social, cultural and migration issues



The main concerns of Muslim families

Marginalisation

- Socio-economic disadvantage
 - Discrimination and problems associated with the visibility of Islam
 - Language issues
 - Dislocation due to migration
 - Marginalisation from within ethno-religious communities
 - Intra familial issues
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Findings – Belonging & Marginalisation

Resilience

Social belonging

- Central role of ethno-religious communities
- Sense of acceptance, tolerance and understanding of Muslims
- Appreciation of life in Australia




Findings – Family Relations & Needs

Influences on family relations

Positive family relations

- Central role of ‘family’ and ‘community’
- Islam source of guidance
- Communication, trust and respect within the family

Family issues and needs


- Adjustments required in settling
 - Limited English language proficiency
 - Parents’ perceived loss of authority
 - Gender issues
 - Young people negotiate different identities
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Main coping mechanisms and help-seeking strategies.

Young people


- Family, friends or trusted community members
- Formal support (help-lines, school counsellors)
- Uncomfortable speaking to religious leaders or elders

Parent participants

- First point of call family and friends
 - Advice from 'key' community members (eg, religious leaders)
 - Multicultural services
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Findings – ‘Gaps’ in Support

Perceived support gaps

- Support for young people
 - Supporting families ‘as a whole’ and single parents
 - Refugees and recently arrived migrants
 - Older people and family carers
 - Information about appropriate forms of parenting
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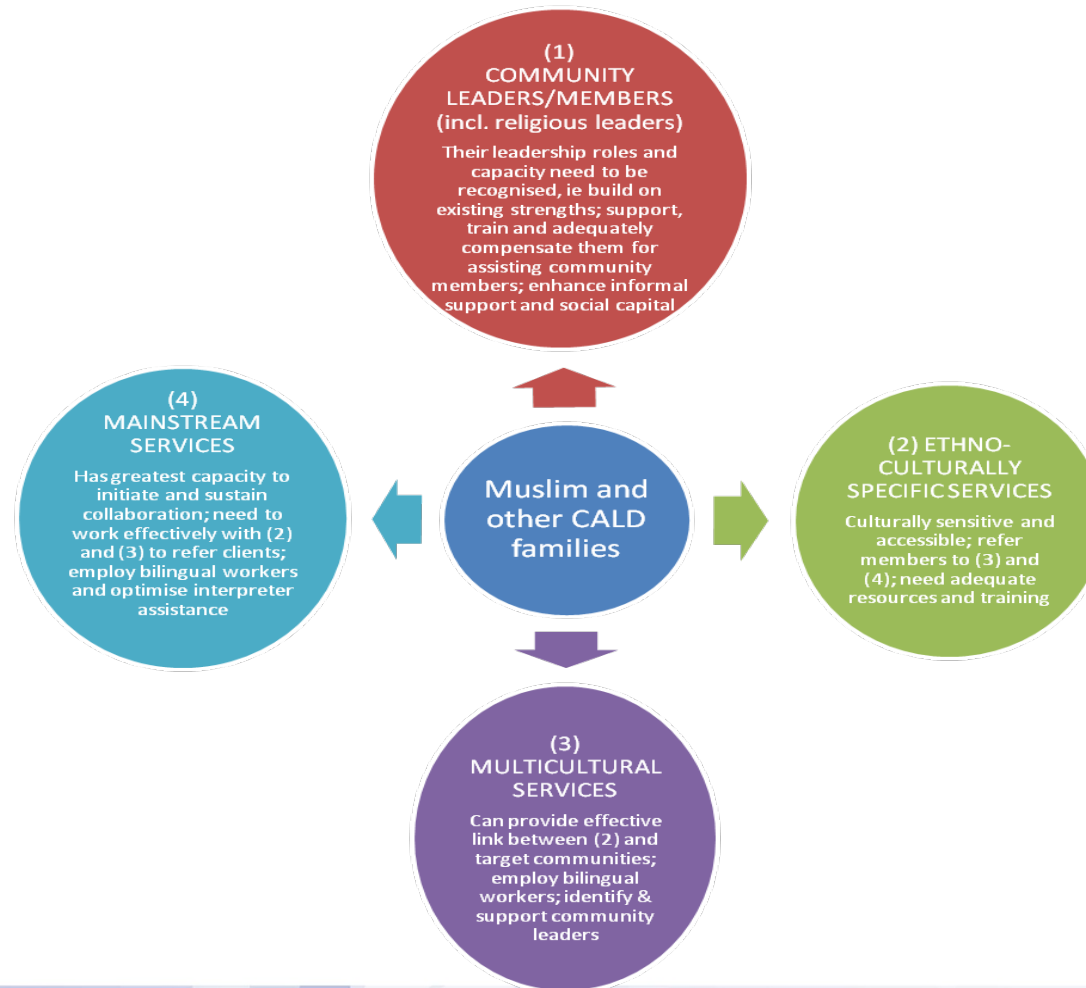
Future Service Directions

Points for Discussion

- Ethnic community/ key members as a 'bridge/link'
- Mosques as places of social networking
- Schools as community bridges
- Ethno-specific, multicultural or mainstream services?



Collaboration and capacity building



Conclusions

- There is no one service or service type that can meet the needs of the Australian Muslim community
- Service response needs to build capacity and provide a range of accessible interventions
- Response also needs to educate the wider community about the Muslim community and its needs.
- Generational and gender issues need to be handled very sensitively
 - they can't be ignored, but also should not be handled with great care.

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