

# inTouch

Annual Report  
2020—2021



# inTouch



inTouch acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the first inhabitants of this nation and the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and live. We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present. We express our gratitude for the sharing of this land, our sorrow for the personal, spiritual and cultural costs of that sharing and hope that we may move forward together in harmony and in the spirit of healing.

We acknowledge the countless women who have experienced family violence, in particular women from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

We recognise the courageous path they have travelled to rebuild their lives and honour their stories which continue to inspire and drive our work.

inTouch is a Rainbow Tick accredited organisation. We value and celebrate diversity, and are respectful of a person's culture, identity, beliefs, gender and sexuality.









# Who We Are

inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence (inTouch) provides person-centred, integrated and culturally responsive family violence services to migrant and refugee communities across Victoria.

We have assisted over 20,000 women and children experiencing family violence throughout our 37 years of operation, providing a holistic service that centres the experiences of victim-survivors in everything we do.

inTouch works across the family violence continuum, providing culturally-informed

early intervention, case management, perpetrator programs, case work, crisis recovery and enhanced capacity-building across the sector and community. We are proud to provide high-level leadership and guidance to all levels of government with our evidence-based, victim-survivor informed advocacy and policy work.



## Our Services

- Learning and development programs for family violence providers and multicultural organisations to build their knowledge and skills when supporting women from refugee and migrant communities
  - Case management that encompasses a first-hand understanding of the migration journey and unique cultural barriers women may face when seeking assistance
  - Post-recovery initiatives for victim-survivors, focusing on economic independence, social and family connection and emotional wellbeing
  - Prevention projects and resource development for migrant and refugee communities
  - Programs focusing on trauma and culturally-informed perpetrator intervention
  - An accredited community legal centre working at the intersection of Family Law and Migration Law
- inTouch is a critical piece in Victoria's family violence response system and an organisation that is growing in size, scope and capacity.
- We are a unique and vital service, with specialist expertise working with people of migrant and refugee backgrounds. This is reflected in our workforce, which is comprised primarily of people who are migrants and refugees themselves – the inTouch team is from over 20 different countries and communities globally.

# History

inTouch's story begins in 1981, when CO.AS.IT (the Italian Assistance Association) organised the Migrant Women and Women's Refuges national seminar.

This event was a historical first – never before had the unique needs of refugee and migrant women and children in family violence-related refuge been discussed as part of a national collaboration. One of the most important conclusions emerging from the seminar was the acknowledgement that refugees needed bilingual and bicultural workers that reflected the cultural and linguistic diversity of the women accessing their services.

In June of 1984, the Refugee Ethnic Workers Program (REWP) was formed. The service began with seven part-time multicultural workers, a part time financial officer, a full-time coordinator, and a range of casual workers.



The REWP highlighted not only the need for culturally sensitive support for women in refuges, but for those who remained in their homes, or were simply disengaged from family violence services altogether.

In 1994, the Refugee Ethnic Workers Program became the Immigrant Women's Domestic Violence Services (IWDVS). This change marked an important step for the organisation, as IWDVS' role became more complicated – taking on the task of supporting clients as well as educating the community about

the ways domestic violence, racism and culture impact immigrant women. IWDVS understood that advocacy and lobbying was integral to the process of changing community attitudes and as well as the judicial and law enforcement-related approaches to violence against immigrant women.

The 1990s were a challenging time for a small organisation with such a large brief. During this period, IWDVS focused on partnerships with other domestic violence services, migrant resource centres and ethno-specific organisations. Support was delivered directly at the refuges or via telephone through the information, support and referral service, amounting to nearly 11,000 calls a year.

In 1998, to appropriately address the increase in demand, IWDVS transitioned from a loose collective into an organisation with a Board of Management.

By 2002, IWDVS had an in-house, full-time migration agent, recognising the important impact temporary visas have within the family violence space. Shortly after this, IWDVS developed a strategic plan with a vision for all women and children to be in control of their own lives in a society free from violence and discrimination.

In 2005, to mark the organisation's 21st year, a number of celebrations were held, including a public event with 150 supporters at the Immigration Museum. This year also marked the establishment of a Training, Research and Consultation Unit to help meet the organisation's strategic aims. This was also the first time in IWDVS' history that males were employed, engaging with newly-arrived migrant and refugee men.

During this time, IWDVS released its first research report, *The Right to be Safe: Immigrant and Refugee Women in Rural Victoria*, examining the needs of CALD women in rural areas experiencing family violence. This report led to the development of a strategic rural outreach plan for the organisation,





commencing with Shepparton and the Hume region. IWDVS was also selected to participate in the pilot Family Violence Division of the Magistrates Court in Heidelberg.

In 2010, inTouch embarked on a new era in the life of the organisation, rebranding to inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, which coincided with the Australian Government's development of the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children. This year also marked the successful development of a Vietnamese Men's Behaviour Change Program.

In 2012, inTouch established its own Community Legal Centre, the first of its kind in Australia. Utilising an innovative, client-centred model, the inTouch Community Legal Centre fulfills the need for specialised, in-house, culturally-appropriate legal support with an

existing relationship of trust. It draws on our broader cultural expertise and established relationships with migrant and refugee victim-survivors of family violence, increasing their access to justice and ensuring equity of outcomes.

In 2014, we celebrated our 30th anniversary, and marked another

first – in recognition of the devastating impact family violence has on all children, we created a therapeutic book called *The Empty Jar*. Launched at Melbourne Writers Festival, *The Empty Jar* is a culturally sensitive resource to assist migrant and refugee children who have experienced family violence.

By 2015, when the Victorian Government established the Royal Commission, inTouch were ready to demonstrate strong leadership and advocacy. We prepared a written submission with 42 recommendations, organised a consultation session with 17 of our clients and presented evidence at public hearings. This evidence was informed by the growth of inTouch's range of programs and services – working with the victim through crisis, addressing their legal needs, and supporting them through to recovery. In addition, inTouch also showcased the organisation's tailored and culturally-sensitive work with men and broader communities.

In 2016, the Royal Commission into Family Violence was released with 227 recommendations, including Recommendation 139 which called on the government to fund inTouch as a specialist family violence service, supporting the sector to respond effectively to the needs of people from refugee and migrant communities who experience family violence.

Today, inTouch is working with approximately 1,650 women annually, undertaking outreach in four courts and other community settings, providing legal services, building the capacity of sector service providers and multicultural organisations, undertaking prevention work, providing research and policy, participating in working groups and steering committees, and providing ongoing programs with perpetrators through Motivation for Change. We have also established NOOR, a Survivor-Advocate advisory group to provide inTouch with ongoing advice with regards to program development and support systems, and to directly impact government and sector policy.

Utilising an innovative, client-centered model, the inTouch Community Legal Centre fulfills the need for specialised, in-house, culturally appropriate legal support with an existing relationship of trust.

# Message from Chair



Miriam Silva,  
Chair

“Our tailored, person-centred services have continued to utilise the inLanguage, inCulture delivery model, providing our clients with a bridge of understanding between their home countries and Australia, guided by people who have been through the migration journey – our staff.

This has been another difficult year for everyone living through the pandemic. inTouch has continued to deal with the realities of a far more virulent strain of COVID which has

brought more uncertainty and disruption to our staff and clients. Reflecting on these challenges and uncertainties, I am humbled and proud that inTouch has continued to serve our growing number of clients with respect and compassion.

We have demonstrated that engaging and collaborating with all communities is not only possible, but essential when addressing

family violence – either through services and programs, building the capacity of the service sector or advocating with government at a policy level. Our work highlighting the unique needs and opportunities within Victoria’s culturally diverse populations has made us a leader in the sector and the community.

Our ‘wraparound’ service, which sits at the intersection of family violence, migration

and law, allows inTouch to foster a workplace where innovation can occur, supported by strong and imaginative leadership. Our interdisciplinary working environment is unique, resulting in critical and effective programs and an ability to influence policy and research at all levels.

Looking outwards, our Strategic Plan has directed inTouch towards countless partnerships and collaborations across the family violence sector, justice, law enforcement, government and community, bringing about enduring, positive change in the lives of the women and children we support.

The demand on inTouch’s services during the pandemic has been considerable. Our continuing and dedicated response throughout this time has been made possible by the focus and commitment of my fellow Board and committee members, who have guided the organisation with enthusiasm and fearlessness. Your insights, wise counsel and passion for inTouch are greatly appreciated.

Finally, and most importantly, I want to thank our CEO Michal Morris and our inTouch staff. Your commitment to ending family and domestic violence is amazing and I am grateful for the work you do every day.



# Message from CEO



## Michal Morris, Chief Executive Officer

I'm delighted to present inTouch's Annual Report for 2020–2021.

I am so proud that this year, inTouch has met the challenge of a global pandemic and has adapted to meet the changing needs of our clients with clarity, confidence, resilience and strength.

We have supported more women and children than ever before through our suite of client-focused programs – Direct Client Services, the Community Legal Centre and our work with men who use violence, Motivation for Change.

The pandemic has also made an impact on the work of our Sector and Community program, requiring us to re-envision our programs, resulting in flexible and more equitable access to learning and development. This year, inTouch has delivered more training than ever before, to communities and organisations not only across metropolitan Melbourne, but to regional and rural service providers too.

I've watched with pride the ability of my colleagues to navigate the complex needs of their clients, the added pressure of working from home and caring for their families and communities, while also staying in contact with loved ones overseas. What strikes me in particular is the deep care and compassion our colleagues have for each other. We are a workforce comprised primarily of people from migrant and refugee backgrounds – over 20 different countries and communities globally. The continued resilience of our staff never fails to astound me, as does their empathy, energy and care for their clients.

As a specialist family violence service, we recognise that in times of stress and crisis, incidents of family violence increase. Predictably, COVID has proved to be a strong case-in-point, with demand on our services increasing 27% during the last financial year. Of particular concern is the impact of COVID and family violence on women in Australia on temporary visas. For far too long, perpetrators have manipulated our migration program and used it as a tool of coercive control. Combined

with the pandemic's restrictions, lockdowns and closed borders, a new and highly vulnerable group of clients has emerged. As we move out of crisis and into recovery, we must look at changing Australia's migration and visa programs to better support and ensure the safety of this cohort of women.

I'm proud to say that it hasn't all been about COVID – at the end of the year we moved into our new, custom-built offices. This change will allow greater collaboration and innovation within the inTouch team as we remove many literal and figurative walls.

inSpire, our post-crisis recovery program, has also achieved some remarkable outcomes this year. Through our partnerships, we have supported ex-clients to build workforce skills, find employment and economic independence, mark cultural celebrations and connect with their communities.

NOOR Survivor-Advocates, (formerly inSpire for Change), have also grown and strengthened this year, ensuring the opinions and experience of victim-survivors influence and transform our services and broader reforms across all levels of Government. I thank this group of resilient and dedicated women for their generosity to inTouch and our programs.

As always, inTouch's achievements are only possible through the hard work, dedication and commitment of our staff, a group of professionals who never stop inspiring me – thank you. I must also acknowledge the work of my Executive Team for their dedication and guidance, and our Board, for their strength, support, commitment and trust – particularly our Chair, Miriam Silva.

I would also like to acknowledge the efforts and contributions of our partners and funders, without whom inTouch's critical programs and services would not exist. Our work – across the family violence sector, academia, advocacy, health, the justice system and numerous communities – is stronger because we do it together.

# Year in Review

## Client Services

+116%

increase in general enquiries and secondary consultations

18.8%

increase in Case Management staff

44.3%

of clients were aged between 25–34

33.7%

of clients were aged between 35–44

27%

increase in individual clients, compared with the previous year

95%

of men enrolled in Motivation for Change completed the program, despite the pandemic and switch to digital delivery

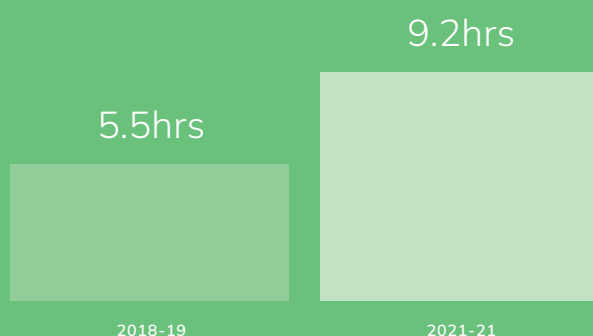
685

families received brokerage assistance through Flexible Support Packages (FSPs), exceeding target by 42%

535

clients received financial assistance through crisis brokerage

Case Managers spent 9.2 hours contacting clients for support periods greater than one day — increasing from 5.5 hours in 2018–19



Motivation for Change Groups were run in English, Hindi and Dari, with Facilitators and Case Managers providing additional support in Punjabi and Pashto



Maintained our partnerships and collaboration with 8 community agencies



inTouch participated in four specialist family violence integrated networks in East, North, South-East and Western Melbourne



Women were from 104 countries and spoke 90 languages



109 men were supported by inTouch's Motivation for Change program, exceeding target by 51%

## Sector and Community



Staff from 86 organisations attended inTouch's in-person and remote training sessions



Partnered with 10 multicultural community organisations to build capacity as part of the Enhanced Pathways program



Co-ordinated three 8-week inLanguage, inCulture victim-survivor recovery groups with sessions in Mandarin, Cantonese and Vietnamese

### InSpire

362

women supported through inSpire programs and emergency relief

694

food packages delivered through emergency relief until December 2020

19

women were from 19 cultural backgrounds

11

inSpire program delivery partners

## Legal Centre

In addition to inTouch's ongoing client base, our legal team assisted:

229

new clients with immigration matters

326

clients with general legal representation, including Health Justice Partnership with Monash Health

67%

of clients in ongoing legal matters, beyond initial advice

## Policy, Advocacy and Research



Published 3 issues/position papers



Made 5 written and one oral submission to national and state inquiries



Produced 4 social media tiles in 5 different languages for 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence



Presented at 4 events



Actively participated in over 30 state and national committees, working groups and advisory bodies



Generated 31 media appearances across local, state and national media- TV, print, radio and online



# Client Services

inTouch's Client Services team provides a unique and holistic service, at the intersection of family violence, migration and law. We offer victim-survivor case management, legal and migration support and perpetrator intervention to culturally diverse clients and communities in Victoria.

The past year has been unprecedented in terms of the demand placed on our services and the complexity of the support required to keep our clients safe and in view.

Our inLanguage, inCulture integrated and culturally responsive service model continues to play a key role in inTouch's case management. Our Direct Services team conduct in-depth needs assessments and safety planning with clients in order to ascertain what they need both immediately and long-term to begin the road to recovery, security and wellbeing. A tailored plan and support package is then developed with a bilingual and bicultural Case Manager, who understands the client's specific cultural needs, barriers and migration journey. This proves to be critical in providing appropriate and ongoing responses to our clients' circumstances.

This year's "stay at home" public health directives and COVID-19's social and economic impacts further highlighted vulnerabilities within inTouch's client base.

Our intake team found that instances of family violence and the volume of calls and referrals to inTouch increased alongside lockdowns. Many previous clients reported that family violence had begun to re-occur.

We have also been contacted by a large number of women who have lost their sources of income as a result of businesses being shut down or restricted. This is unsurprising considering the pandemic's impact on industries with a high percentage of casual migrant workers – hospitality and beauty services, for example.

We know that at any given time, over 50 percent of our clients at inTouch are women who are on temporary visas. This includes women who are on spousal/partner visas, skilled workers

or dependents of those on skilled worker visas, student visas, and tourist/visitor visas.

These women regularly face barriers to accessing support and safety due to the limited entitlements of their visa, social isolation and the absence of income assistance, regularly facing significant financial hardship. They are also ineligible for the Federal Government's disaster payments and financial support packages (JobSeeker and JobKeeper).

## Case Study

Mai and her 8-year-old daughter first came to inTouch late last year. She arrived in Australia in 2017 and is on a bridging visa. Both Mai and her child experienced physical abuse from her ex-husband and are currently in undisclosed emergency accommodation to ensure their safety. She has contacted inTouch previously due to her partner's violence, which has again become a problem.

Mai is usually employed casually as a Nail Technician but has been unable to work due to the extended lockdown and associated health orders restricting work in her industry. Due to her visa status, she is also ineligible for JobSeeker or JobKeeper.

In the week prior to the current lockdown, Mai's daughter was ill and she could not source childcare in order to complete her work shifts. She also has no information about when she will be able to commence working again.

Mai's Case Manager, Lee, checked in with her to see how the lockdown was affecting her and her young daughter. Lee made sure that Mai understood the current restrictions, how to check for exposure sites, and information on testing locations, proper mask use and vaccination.

During the conversation, Mai told her Case Manager about her lost income, and Lee was able to apply for a crisis package to ensure she had food and essential supplies for her and her daughter. She also encouraged Mai to make contact should she need further financial or emotional support and will continue to check in with her over the coming weeks.

## Case Study

Mila is from Russia and arrived in Australia in 2016. She has three children with her partner. She is on a temporary partner visa and is not eligible for Centrelink income support. She was referred to inTouch from a local specialist family violence service.

She experienced severe ongoing family violence, including coercive control, with her partner restricting and monitoring her finances and threatening deportation. The police were called during an altercation and issued a family violence notice. Child protection became involved in the situation to keep the children safe and well.

In addition to being ineligible for income support because of her visa status, Mila can't work due to her parenting commitments. She is socially isolated due to the abuse and limited English skills.

Her inTouch Case Manager, Kristina, applied for crisis funds to ensure that Mila and her children have access to basic needs while working on long term goals. Kristina also liaised with Centrelink around child support and the family tax benefit and linked Mila with the inTouch Legal Centre for family law advice and immigration assistance.

Kristina also accessed inTouch's short term financial assistance program to cover the cost for police checks and health examinations, visa applications and a new private rental, including furniture and whitegoods. inTouch also approved funding for a sewing machine so that Mila can establish some financial independence by starting her own micro business doing tailoring and alterations.

This allowed us to fast-track emergency support for our clients, securing food, housing and other essential items for them and their children

inTouch's Case Managers have continued to work closely with all areas of business to ensure the best outcomes for our clients. In addition to referring clients to our Legal Centre for migration and legal support, inTouch's Case Managers also refer suitable ex- clients out to inSpire's recovery program, to secure additional social and community security and financial independence.

Key to keeping women and their children safe is continuing to keep perpetrators engaged through our Motivation for Change (MFC) program. Throughout the year, Motivation for Change staff also encouraged participants' exes or current partners to continue to engage with our main Direct Services Team, providing support and monitoring their safety.

It's important to note the additional pressure that the last twelve months has placed on inTouch Client Services, and frontline staff across the sector. As with many other workers, inTouch Case Managers provided essential services to clients whilst also managing their own experiences of living through a pandemic. Demand for our services increased throughout the year in addition to complexity in cases, resulting in significantly larger caseloads. Our Case Managers continue to work remotely, balancing their personal needs and family obligations as well as tirelessly supporting our clients during this challenging time.

In response to the hardships experienced by women on temporary visas and the increasing demand on family violence services, the Victorian Government and Family Safety Victoria provided additional funding, including COVID Case Management and short-term financial aid.





## Motivation for Change

Motivation for Change is inTouch's early intervention program for men who use violence.

Based on our successful inLanguage, inCulture service model for victim-survivors, Motivation for Change (MFC) is a free and voluntary program that addresses the significant barriers migrant and refugee men can face when engaging with mainstream family violence services. It combines one-

on-one case management and group sessions with an understanding of the migration journey, language, culture and faith into the program, providing a space where men can reflect on their behaviours, share their experiences and strengthen their relationships.

MFC continues to grow, functioning as a key piece in family violence reform strategy and programming throughout inTouch's work and the sector at large.

For much of the year, the program suspended in-person meetings, conducting group work and intensive case management

virtually. inTouch quickly recognised the need to provide critical and ongoing support to this cohort of men in order to sustain a safe environment for their partners and children during Victoria's lockdowns.

These clients were "held" in inTouch's system for longer than usual, with MFC Case Managers finding that men wanted to stay engaged with the program due to anxiety relating to COVID-19 and public health directives. Many were at risk of homelessness, and without our continued engagement may have been likely to disengage from services and breach obligations such as intervention orders.

Despite the difficulty online sessions can often present in terms of regular participation, privacy and technological literacy, MFC worked with 109 men throughout the course of the financial year, with a 95% attendance rate for both online and in-person weekly sessions.

Motivation for Change currently conducts meetings in English, Dari and Hindi, and incoming referrals for the program continue to increase. We expect to be running more sessions and case management into 2022.

"The concept of mediation, restorative practice or behaviour change is a western notion – there is a lot of misunderstanding in some communities about what these are. We can encourage understanding as we work with men".

— Ali Hussain, Motivation for Change





# NOOR Family Violence Survivor-Advocates

## Narrating Our Own Resilience

In 2018, inTouch established a Victim-Survivor advisory group to provide a voice to former clients – women from migrant or refugee backgrounds who have experienced family violence.

Known initially as Inspire for Change, the group rebranded in 2021 to **NOOR Family Violence Survivor-Advocates**, reflecting the growth and development of the group, and its continuing focus on members owning their stories and using their experiences to advocate for change – narrating their own resilience.

It has been a busy year for the group, as they have navigated increasing requests for consultation, committee representation and public speaking opportunities.

NOOR consulted with a wide range of community and government stakeholders, including the Department of Justice and Community Safety, Domestic Violence Victoria, the Salvation Army, Victoria Legal Aid and WIRE. NOOR also assisted with the development and assessment of a range of inTouch programs, including

inSpire initiatives, policy and advocacy, research and direct service provision.

Members were featured in media and public speaking engagements with the Age, ABC News, MamaMia, Monash University, WIRE, Victoria Legal Aid and with internal inTouch events such as the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence. SBS provided a media and public speaking training session to assist NOOR in this work, with more training and capacity-building planned throughout the next year.

The voices of victim-survivors are increasingly recognised as an essential part of the broader societal response to family violence, and inTouch is privileged to work with and support this group of strong, resilient and intelligent women.

“We are like veterans, we have been through war and trauma, but we have come out the other side stronger and want to make a difference – to shine a light for other women and make sure that they don’t have the same experience.”

— NOOR Family Violence Survivor Advocate

# Legal Centre

Our Legal Centre was established in 2012 and provides legal advice and assistance to clients who are already receiving support through inTouch's Case Managers, through an integrated model.

We recognise that migrant and refugee women in Australia experience multiple barriers when trying to access the justice system. Our lawyers, migration agents and case management staff work together to provide an inclusive service response to migrant and refugee women experiencing family violence and are the first multidisciplinary practice in Australia to do so. This end-to-end support model also allows inTouch to provide a comprehensive continuum of service – the client's file and personal circumstances (including instances of violence) are managed privately and concurrently by practitioners, avoiding recurrences of trauma.

This year our legal centre has grown, and for the first time secured ongoing funding from Victoria Legal Aid. This critical support has allowed us to increase our capacity in terms of processing referrals and upskilling our staff, ensuring the ongoing services of our team of expert lawyers and migration agents.

These services can include:

- Protection from family violence – intervention orders
- Family law – dispute resolution
- Parenting matters
- Property and financial matters
- Child support and spousal maintenance
- Divorce
- Immigration and Visa assistance
- Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal (VOCAT) applications

As with all areas of business, the pandemic has impacted the inTouch Legal Centre's operations in several ways. Alongside the increased demand for services, in-person hearings regarding family violence matters have been suspended for much of the year, creating many challenges and opportunities for our clients and legal team.

Remote hearings, either online or by phone, allowed the inTouch team to serve more clients, in more locations, by eliminating travel time.

Additionally, while inTouch typically attends hearings across metropolitan Melbourne, this year it has also been able to represent clients in regional areas like Geelong and Ballarat.

## Case Study

Aahida is from Pakistan, is on a temporary visa, and has one child. She was referred to the Legal Centre through her inTouch Case Manager.

Aahida suffered severe sexual and physical abuse at the hands of her partner. Unfortunately, Aahida's daughter witnessed much of the abuse. Both were relocated with the assistance of inTouch to a rental property where a Government Organisation breached privacy by accidentally disclosing Aahida's new address to the perpetrator. Our client arrived home with her child one afternoon to find the perpetrator inside her house with a knife waiting for her.

We assisted Aahida with an Intervention Order (IVO), Immigration, Family Law, VOCAT application and breach of Privacy Laws.

Furthermore, inTouch helped Aahida to:

- Make police statements where the perpetrator was charged criminally for breach of IVO and assault. She received an indefinite final IVO in her favour.
- Obtain sole parenting responsibility and Airport Watchlist Order.
- Permanent Residency under the Family Violence Provision.
- VOCAT: Award of \$30,520 for client and offer of \$13,617 the child (as primary and secondary Victims of Crime)
- Engage with Slater & Gordon Lawyers to act on a pro bono basis, assisting Aahida in lodging a formal privacy breach complaint with the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner. After a difficult and protracted period of negotiation, they by far exceeded the highest amount ever awarded by the Information Commissioner in privacy complaint cases in Australia. Our client received \$36,000.

The perpetrator escaped his arrest by leaving Australia. The AFP has issued a warrant for his arrest.

Our client is planning to commence her own catering business with the awards received to start a new life in Australia. Without the assistance of our service, this case would not have resulted in such a positive and comprehensive outcome.



For inTouch clients, this is a chance to be heard, to gain financial independence, engage in self-care and, for some, to restore a sense of dignity.

However, the increase in technology during lockdowns presented some issues, including on occasion the presence of perpetrators in the home during the hearing, a lack of aid for clients requiring in-person assistance where there is literacy and further language problems, and initial access to technology where the client is financially disadvantaged, or computers and

phones are already being used for online learning. Our team has been working to mitigate these issues where possible.

inTouch also continued supporting staff and women accessing hospital services through our Health Justice Partnership with Monash Health.

Health Justice Partnerships (HJPs) are an innovative model of service delivery that connects legal and health professionals to deliver comprehensive outcomes to clients. This method of embedding legal expertise within a healthcare setting (like hospitals), allows professionals to engage with people who might not know they need or qualify for legal assistance.

inTouch's HJP provides a direct referral pathway for free legal advice for migrant and refugee women experiencing family violence,

and health services through Monash Health, in addition to secondary consultations for staff.

Our team also had continuing success on behalf of our clients through the Victims of Crime Tribunal (VOCAT). VOCAT was established to provide financial assistance to victims of crime – whether they were the primary victim, a relative or dependent of a victim, or witness to a crime. The tribunal helps individuals recover by providing financial assistance for expenses incurred (or reasonably likely to be incurred) as a direct result of crime. It can award financial assistance prior to a charge or conviction of an offense arising from an act of violence.

For inTouch clients, this is a chance to be heard, to gain financial independence, engage in self-care and, for some, to restore a sense of dignity. inTouch's free and expert legal representation has resulted in excellent outcomes for our clients, allowing them to gain access to therapeutic services, safety and living expenses, medical treatment, counselling and more.

Our Legal Centre helps us provide valuable, integrated support for clients as they navigate often extremely challenging contact with the legal system. In the coming year, inTouch's Legal Centre hopes to continue supporting our clients on their road to recovery, independence and wellbeing.



# Sector and Community

Sector and Community programs are a critical part of inTouch's family violence prevention, response and recovery strategy.

In 2016, The Royal Commission into Family Violence recommended funding inTouch to provide training and advice to family violence service providers, as well as providers of legal, justice and universal services, to enable them to respond effectively to the needs of people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Funded primarily by State Government, we've developed the skills, approaches and reputation to help us launch multiple projects.

inTouch's pioneering integrated service delivery model and first-hand knowledge of the migrant and refugee experience allows us to offer unique and in-depth training opportunities, project management, capacity building programs, and support and advocacy initiatives.

The emergence of COVID in Australia, along with the accompanying border closures, social and economic impacts and public health directives, have continued to affect how we work and interact with the community. Despite this, inTouch's Sector and Community team has grown and strengthened the programs and training we deliver online and in person. For example, this year we were able to offer our learning and development modules to more regional and rural service providers and organisations with staff at multiple sites, including hospitals.

Increased technology use also allowed us to deliver flexible and timely training for organisations with rapidly shifting priorities, including addressing pandemic response and training additional employees. inTouch Case Managers used technology to consistently lead sessions and co-present with trainers, helping us embed learning and development in our own practice. Our Case Managers are also subject matter experts who can answer practical questions about their work on the spot.

Delivering a mixed model of in-person presentations and online seminars also increased the team's ability to deliver a higher volume of presentations.

Throughout the year, inTouch maintained its work with culturally diverse communities, the justice and legal system and sector organisations, through a series of initiatives delivering innovative, partnership-led projects that created impact on the ground. These include:

## Recovery Groups

inTouch's inLanguage, inCulture Recovery Groups continued throughout the year and were run jointly with various partner organisations across Melbourne. Clients were provided with culturally accessible information about healthy relationships, employment rights, community and parenting support, Centrelink benefits and legal matters. Emotional and physical health was also addressed through mindfulness sessions, art therapy and yoga.

## Victorian Sikh Gurudwaras Council Prevention of Family Violence Project

Working in collaboration with the Victorian Sikh Gurudwaras Council, inTouch developed a communication strategy to provide Sikh faith and community leaders with guidance and tools to facilitate awareness, understanding and commitment to community owned and led prevention of family violence.

## Training

A key priority of our work in the sector and community is our learning and development program. Sessions are tailored to an organisation's specific needs and focus on culturally responsive practice and improving skills for responding to family violence. This encompasses training for both established sector professionals and multicultural workers, as well as meetings and issues-based seminars.

**During the year, inTouch presented training, community of practice meetings and seminars on new topics as a response to sector and community demand. For example:**

- Working with migrant and refugee men in perpetrator programs, using inTouch's Motivation for Change Program as an example
- The Role of Economic Independence in Recovery with Brotherhood of St Laurence and inTouch's inSpire Initiative
- Supporting women from refugee and migrant communities with their mental health during COVID with inTouch Case Managers
- Co-Case Management in collaboration with WAYSS and Rissan Lawyers, with inTouch Direct Services
- Forced Marriage in Australia in collaboration with Red Cross Australia, Monash University, inTouch Direct Services, Legal Centre and Policy and Advocacy

“Thank you so very much for having these conversations. I think it is important for us as practitioners to understand the level of complexity migrants face and deal with on daily basis.”

— inTouch training participant

## Enhanced Pathways to Family Violence Work

Since the Royal Commission into Family Violence, the specialist response and prevention sector has grown rapidly and this is likely to continue. The three-year Enhanced Pathways program aimed to provide a clear pathway into the sector for students and workers with transferrable skills and experience.

## Orange Door Training

The Orange Door is a free service for adults, children and young people who are experiencing or have experienced family violence, and families who need extra support with the care of children. inTouch engaged with Orange Door services across Victoria, aiming to develop culturally responsive practice knowledge for working with migrant and refugee clients and families across the key practice areas of family violence, child and family, child protection and working with male perpetrators.

## Victoria Police

This year, inTouch partnered with Victoria Police to design and develop a customised in-person training session coupled with online units for Victoria Police Specialist Family Violence Investigators. The project was designed to strengthen engagement with families from migrant and refugee communities and provide case studies and “Train the Trainer” sessions for VicPol’s Centre of Learning for Family Violence.

## Working for Victoria

inTouch received funding for the employment program Working for Victoria and recruited nine team members to support our COVID response work at the end of 2020. The team worked on our emergency relief program, inSpire, policy development, as well as planning and implementing an information campaign for multicultural communities on family violence within the context of the pandemic, notably in terms of culturally accessible services.

## Board of Imams Victoria

inTouch established a partnership with the Board of Imams Victoria and undertook a needs assessment to develop a bespoke training program including introductory family violence prevention and Recognise and Respond training. inTouch also delivered a module on the intersection between visa status, faith and family safety. This was received positively, with many Imams participating. We continued working with the community to develop a follow-up session using a relevant case study.

## Indian Care

inTouch also strengthened its partnership with Indian Care, working with the organisation to support their workforce’s response to the increased demand from the community due to COVID. inTouch met with staff to guide them in best practice, remote learning, MARAM alignment and facilitated multi-network collaboration through community of practice meetings. Our team continues to support their ongoing needs, including support with referral processes, information on legal rights, and advice for women on temporary visas.

## inTouch COVID Hub

To further assist the sector response to the pandemic, inTouch created a specific COVID hub on our website. The hub provides resources for women experiencing family violence, practitioners, service providers and multicultural community organisations.

It includes an overview of how we’re providing a COVID-safe service, our issue papers and several COVID information videos. We also included online client referral and secondary consultation forms, an explanation of COVID restrictions and vaccines in simple English and a collection of translated resources in over 60 languages. We continued to update the hub over the past year, adding additional resources and videos discussing the impact of COVID on several programs, including client and legal services, Motivation for Change and brokerage.



## Annual Report 2020–2021

# inSpire

### Overview

Our inSpire initiative has continued to grow and innovate as we support inTouch's ex-clients in their journey to recovery – living their lives, their way.

This year we have supported 362 women and their children with emergency relief and a suite of programs that strengthen family bonds, foster economic independence and encourage social and community connection.

We have developed partnerships and solidified existing ones, building our capacity to provide tailored, culturally supportive programs.

# 56%

Philanthropic grants

# 16%

Donations

# 10%

Community Fundraising

# 18%

Campaigns

“Doing your resume, knowing your skills and what you can do boosted my confidence. Even though I saw my resume, I didn’t feel good about it, like it’s nothing. Doing this, matching the job description/ ads, key words... that’s when the lightbulb popped. I slowly began to feel good about it. Because of this project, I got interviews, I understand about CVs. It was really great”

— inSpire’s Given the Chance Program Participant

## Economic Independence

inSpire significantly expanded our ability to support women on their journey to economic independence this year.

We continued to collaborate with partners across Melbourne to ensure women have the support they need to build their skills and take steps towards securing stable, long-term employment. This year, inSpire delivered a new small grants program which allowed program participants to enrol in technical training, access childcare, acquire technology and build their skills to increase their competitiveness in the job market.

In addition, we piloted a mentoring program, pairing bicultural career mentors with inSpire participants to support them on their journey towards employment. We also helped women navigate the Australian job market by holding workshops on resume writing and interview preparation.

## Social and Family Connections

Although this year was challenging due to regular changes in restrictions for in-person gatherings, we were proud to host a number of cultural celebrations. We came together to mark Christmas, Eid al-Fitr and Diwali, either face-to-face or virtually.

For some women, these events were the only times they interacted with others outside their household, while for others, it marked the first time they were able to celebrate these festivals with their children – building positive memories together.

We continued to provide scholarships to children, aiding participation in activities such as art classes, swimming lessons, traditional dance, stage school and gym classes. inSpire also held our first community activity groups, providing mothers and their children the opportunity to have some fun and respite. This year, we came together in partnership with Sing&Grow to hold music therapy groups.

We know children are also affected by experiences of family violence, and it can be a difficult time for mothers and their children as they work to rebuild their lives.

“My daughter used to be very sad at home before coming to the program. Now, she interacts more at home and has started to look happier than before. She eagerly waits to attend the music sessions and her confidence level has increased as well... she loves it. I will get the instruments so that I can continue to play with her once the sessions end... we are so happy that we could take part.”

— inSpire Music Therapy Program Participant

Our school holiday program involved a trip to Melbourne Zoo. This provided women with an opportunity to focus on their family, to do something new, exciting and fun, and to start looking to the future – all important parts of the healing process.





# Policy and Advocacy

inTouch continues to have a strong focus on research, advocacy and policy, to build the evidence of what we do, to share our perspectives on issues that affect migrant and refugee women who experience family violence, and to influence policy to improve outcomes for our clients and their communities.

This year, inTouch participated in several meetings with Ministers and Shadow Ministers from Commonwealth and State governments. We also met, consulted and collaborated with departmental representatives, peak bodies, media outlets, academics, consultants and peer agencies in order to improve responses to family violence and positively impact state and federal government policy.

We participated in over 50 meetings, roundtables, advisory groups, committees, seminars and forums to engage with and inform the community, the sector, and other stakeholders about the work we do and the clients we support. Our work during this period focused on the following key issues and emerging themes:

## COVID-19 and its impact on temporary visa holders

Clients who are on temporary visas can face significant barriers to accessing support when they experience family violence, including barriers to housing, social security and Medicare. The pandemic and subsequent lockdowns compounded these impacts. Lack of access to money or employment during lockdowns, many clients' ineligibility for Government support packages, and their inability to return overseas, caused many temporary visa holders to face disadvantage and destitution. We documented these impacts in a series of issues papers, presentations at webinars and seminars, and through partnering with the Monash Gender and Family Violence Prevention Centre on a research project. This project resulted in the publication of a report that analysed the impact of the first lockdown on 100 of our clients. Of particular significance, the Monash report found that of the inTouch clients who were employed at the start of lockdown, 100% of them either

lost their jobs or had their employment hours significantly reduced. inTouch also continues to be on the secretariat of the National Advocacy Group on Women on Temporary Visas Experiencing Family Violence.



## Criminalising coercive control

In Australia, the coercive control debate has gained momentum this year after the brutal murder of Hannah Clarke and her children by her ex-husband. Policymakers and stakeholders approached inTouch to build their understanding of the impacts that criminalising coercive control may have on migrant and refugee communities. In order to better understand this ourselves, inTouch conducted research and consultation with our Direct Services Team, Legal Centre, Motivation for Change program and NOOR Survivor-Advocates, and developed a position paper. During this time, we also worked with our colleagues at No to Violence, facilitating a national roundtable with agencies that work specifically with migrant and refugee communities to explore the issue. Supporting this work, inTouch also featured in several media interviews discussing this complex topic.

There are a multitude of barriers our clients face when they interact with the justice system. From misidentification as a perpetrator, to language barriers and systems abuse

## Forced marriage

Advocacy on forced marriage and related offences like servitude and human trafficking continue to be policy priorities for inTouch. In June 2021, we released our position paper on forced marriage, discussing the intersections between family violence and forced marriage among our client cohorts. Furthermore, inTouch

continues to participate in the Executive Group of the Red Cross-facilitated Victorian Forced Marriage Network (VFMN). As part of our role in this group, inTouch co-ordinates a sub-working group of agencies that provide direct services to clients who have experienced forced marriage.

Working Group, together with colleagues from across Australia. As part of this group, we held meetings with government ministers and senior public servants across multiple state and federal jurisdictions.

## Access to justice for migrant and refugee women experiencing family violence

There are a multitude of barriers our clients face when they interact with the justice system. From misidentification as a perpetrator, to language barriers and systems abuse, our clients often experience complex and challenging legal barriers, sometimes over many years.

Throughout this year, we have provided input into Victoria Police resources and have worked with the Victorian Law Reform Commission to provide our perspective on improving justice responses to sexual offences. inTouch has also participated in local networks and working groups, including the Family Violence Justice Advocacy Network and the Family Violence Working Group, co-ordinated by the Federation of Community Legal Centres.

## Dowry abuse and other forms of financial abuse

inTouch participated in several activities on issues relating to financial abuse, such as dowry abuse. We continue to be active participants of the national Dowry Abuse

In the last year, inTouch has participated in the following committees, working groups and advisory bodies:

Adolescent Family Violence Providers	National Dowry Abuse Working Group
AWAVA Advisory Group	Northern Integrated Family Violence Service Steering Committee
CBA SVA Financial Abuse and Housing Project Advisory Group	Northern Counselling and Support Alliance
DV Vic/ DVRCV Board	NTV Members
DV Vic SFVS Leadership Group	Respect Victoria FV Prevention COVID Forum
DV Vic Orange Door Working Group	Safer and Stronger Steering Group and Community of Practice
DV Vic/FSV FSP community of practice	Safe Steps Advisory Committee
Family Violence Reform Advisory Group, FSV	Sector Perpetrator Accountability Group
Federation of Community Legal Centres	Service Delivery Stakeholder Network, coordinated by Victoria Police – Family Violence Command
Forced Marriage Network	Southern Melbourne: The Orange Door Working Group
Crisis Response Advisory Group, FSV	Women's Correctional Services Advisory Board
Harmony Alliance Council	Western Integrated Family Violence Governance Group
Justice Advocacy Network	Working for Victoria Stakeholder Meeting and the Working for Victoria Control Group
MARAM Practice Guide Consultations	
Multicultural CEO Network	
Multicultural Communities' Family Violence Working Group	
National Advocacy Group on women on temporary visas experiencing family violence	

# Financials



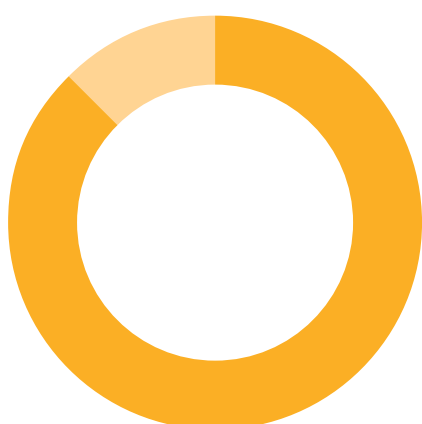
## Total Income

Family Safety Victoria	52.30%
Victoria Legal Aid	7.34%
Office for Women	8.64%
Other	31.72%



## Income by Program

Direct Services	43.02%
Sector and Community	17.63%
Brokerage	17.73%
inSpire	1.49%
Motivation for Change	9.29%
Legal	9.00%
Other	1.84%



## Expenditure (program and admin)

Expenses	
Program and services	87.70%
Operations and administration	12.30%
Deficit	-0.60%

# Board of Directors

2020–2021

inTouch is a company limited by guarantee.  
We are governed by a constitution and a  
Board of Directors chaired by Miriam Silva.

Our board meets regularly and is comprised of a diverse array of individuals with backgrounds in business, family violence, HR, health, mental health, finance and non-profit leadership.

We have six committees of the Board: Governance and Nominations, Finance, Risk and Audit, Family Violence, Strategy and New Business and the Men's Advisory Committee.

## Chair

**Miriam Silva**, Chair- Strategy  
and New Business  
joined Board in 2019, Chair since 2019

## Deputy Chair

**Tassia Michaleas**, Chair- Governance  
and Nominations Committee  
joined Board in 2019, Deputy Chair since 2020

## Board Members

**Alecia Rathbone**, Chair- Finance Committee  
joined Board in 2018

**Karina Posanzini**, Chair- Risk and Audit Committee  
joined Board in 2018

**Maria Hagias**, Chair- Family Violence Committee  
joined Board in 2019

**Prof. Prasuna Reddy**,  
joined Board in 2018

**Anna Hart**,  
joined Board in 2019

**Imaan Khan**,  
joined Board in 2020



The Chair, Board and staff of inTouch would like to thank our co-opted Committee members, who so generously contributed their time, knowledge and experience throughout the year: Alyssa Rusciano, Belinda Fong-Gardner, Tasneem Chopra OAM, Marini De Silva, Samar Mcheileh, Mark Pierce (Chair- Men's Advisory Group), Andrew Do, Dr Robert Millard, Prof Abdullah Saeed AM, Dr Hass Dellal AO, Prof Mohamad Abdalla AM, Gulnara Abbasova and Jade Hart.



# Acknowledgements

**inTouch's work would not be possible without the support of the Victorian Government.**

Department of Families, Fairness and Housing

Department of Health and Human Services

Department of Justice and Regulation

Department of Premier and Cabinet

Family Safety Victoria

**We would like to recognise the immense contribution of our donors and funding bodies as well as our community, sector and research partners. This includes:**

Australian Women Against  
Violence Alliance (AWAVA)

AustralAsian Centre for Human  
Rights and Health

CEDA

Chinese Community Social Services Inc

City of Yarra

CoHealth

Deloitte

Domestic Violence Victoria and Domestic  
Violence Resource Centre Victoria

Dowry Abuse Working Group

Dr Steven Vaughan

Eastern Community Legal Services

Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria

Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor

Federation of Community Legal Centres

Harmony Alliance

Harmony Project – La Trobe University

Holding Redlich

Justice Advocacy Network

Lifeline

Migrant and Refugee Health

Partnership Council

Migration Council of Australia

Monash Gender and Family Violence

Prevention Centre and Dr Marie Segrave

National Advocacy Group on Women on  
Temporary Visas Experiencing Family Violence  
NIFVS

Northern Community Legal Centre

Northern Counselling and Support Alliance

No to Violence

Our Watch

Red Cross Australia

Refugee Legal

Respect Victoria

Ressan Lawyers

Safe Steps

SisterWorks

Spectrum

The Coherence Group and Sonia Tallarida

The Social Studio

University of South Australia

Victorian Legal Aid

WAYSS

Wesnet

Whittlesea Community Connections

WIFVC

Women's Health in the North

Women's Health West

Women's Legal Service Victoria

**We would like to recognise the supporters of our inSpire initiative:**

Brotherhood of St Lawrence

City of Greater Dandenong

Collier Charitable Trust

Dangerous Females

Edward Wilson Estate

Helen McPherson Smith Trust

Good Samaritan Inn

Kinfolk Café and Social Enterprise

Scanlon Foundation

StreetSmart

The Barlow Foundation

Victoria Women's Trust

**inTouch would also like to give special thanks to the members of the NOOR Survivor-Advocate Group (formerly inSpire for Change). These women generously provide advice and support to inTouch throughout our work.**



in7



## Connect with us

GPO Box 2905  
Melbourne Victoria 3001  
03 9413 6500  
[admin@intouch.org.au](mailto:admin@intouch.org.au)

[facebook.com/inTouchVic](https://facebook.com/inTouchVic)   
[twitter/intouchvic](https://twitter/intouchvic) 

Toll free call to **1800 755 988** if you  
are experiencing family violence

Find out more at [intouch.org.au](https://intouch.org.au)

**inTouch**

