

# CMW Response to the Federal Budget 2026–27

## Multicultural Mental Health Cannot Remain an Afterthought

The Centre for Muslim Wellbeing (CMW) welcomes the Federal Government's continued investment in healthcare, suicide prevention, and women's health.

We acknowledge important investments in public hospitals, bulk billing, refugee employment pathways, and targeted mental health responses for communities impacted by the Bondi attack.

CMW remains concerned, however, that the Budget continues to overlook a critical issue facing multicultural communities: psychological well-being extends beyond access to treatment and is deeply influenced by experiences of safety, inclusion, trust, and belonging.

These realities are particularly visible across Muslim communities, where we continue to see the cumulative psychological impacts of rising Islamophobia and racism, housing stress, grief linked to global conflict, and ongoing barriers to culturally responsive mental health care.

The Budget's targeted response following the Bondi attack reflects an important recognition that fear, hatred, and social division carry profound psychological impacts for communities. Prevention, however, cannot begin only after a crisis or tragedy occurs.

Despite these ongoing pressures, multicultural mental health remains largely absent from broader mental health reform discussions, while reductions to multicultural affairs funding risk weakening the very community infrastructure that supports prevention, trust, and social cohesion.

Governments cannot continue investing primarily in the consequences of exclusion while underinvesting in the conditions that prevent harm in the first place.

CMW calls on the Federal Government to:

- restore and strengthen multicultural affairs funding
- invest in culturally responsive mental health care and workforce development
- support community-led mental health navigation and early intervention programs
- strengthen anti-racism and social cohesion initiatives
- recognise culturally responsive, community-led care as essential mental health infrastructure

Mental health reform must recognise that prevention, trust, belonging, and cultural safety are central to community wellbeing.

Mental health reform cannot succeed while multicultural communities remain structurally underserved.