

Northeast Roadshow

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Background/Purpose:

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities experience poorer sexual and reproductive health (SRH) outcomes and face unique barriers to accessing SRH care and information, including language barriers, stigma, discrimination, Medicare ineligibility and limited health literacy.

Victoria is Australia's second largest settlement state for refugees and migrants, with Northeast Victoria home to a growing number of CALD communities, through the Humanitarian Settlement Program and the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme.

The Centre for Excellence in Rural Sexual Health (CERSH) identified a gap in SRH education for CALD communities and the workforce that supports them.

Approach:

In partnership with Multicultural Health and Support Services and local community organisations, CERSH coordinated and co-delivered cross-cultural SRH education for community members and local workforce across Northeast Victoria. The program was designed to increase workforce confidence to support CALD communities SRH and to enhance SRH literacy among these communities.

In Shepparton, Health System Navigators (HSN) reported gaps in SRH knowledge and confidence, alongside a desire to deliver culturally relevant education to their communities. CERSH established a collaborative partnership with the HSN to provide targeted professional development, and implement a train-the-trainer model, enabling HSN to deliver community education.

Outcomes/Impact:

HSN independently delivered SRH education within two weeks of training. Approximately 80 CALD community members were upskilled in consent, sexually transmissible infections and contraception education, with 300 condoms distributed. Local workforce participants reported 30% increase in knowledge and confidence in discussing SRH. The project remains ongoing, with final results available September 2026.

Innovation and Significance:

The program successfully engaged hard-to-reach regional and rural CALD communities, increasing SRH engagement and literacy, beginning to break down

stigma and taboos and build workforce capability to engage confidently in a culturally safe way with CALD communities.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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