

AVP-WA Chairperson's Report 2011

As Chairperson of the AVP-WA Committee in 2011 I am pleased to be delivering this report. 2011 has been another very productive and successful year for AVP-WA, though more one of consolidation than expansion.

Workshops

In 2011 we conducted 38 workshops in WA and Sally Herzfeld went to Darwin to assist with another 2. We worked in 4 prisons doing 11 in Acacia, 1 in Wooroloo, 3 in Karnet and several in Broome. In Acacia we experimented with some specific participant workshops including one for indigenous inmates and two all male workshops with only male inmate and outmate facilitators. Community Workshops included 3 for the Wirrapunda Foundation at the Leederville campus of Central TAFE, working with young indigenous people returning to study – a new initiative, with its own challenges. Warnbro Community College continued to offer basic, advanced and T4f workshops for students, staff and community as demand and resources permitted – 7 in 2011 – thanks to Olwyn Maddock who continues to do such a fabulous job for us there.

Facilitators

We have over 60 community facilitators on our books and about a third of those were active in some way in delivering workshops during 2011. We once more trained many new facilitators this year – inmate and outmates. Many of our current facilitators are men in prisons and several who have been released are now working with us in the community. Our workshops in prisons other than Acacia are greatly helped by prisoners who have been trained at Acacia but transferred to another prison, but this is a somewhat haphazard process and really can't be systematised, as we rarely know very much in advance who has been transferred and for how long. We are very appreciative of many of the staff and administration at Acacia who are very supportive of what we do there and go out of their way to assist us.

We are delighted to now have several Muslim women and a number of indigenous facilitators working with us.

Training

Monthly training nights have continued to be held and two training days were held at Acacia, led by inmates. These sessions are also attended by outmate facilitators. Jim Thom again ably coordinated training this year and we thank him very much for this. A number of facilitators volunteered to lead sessions and share their knowledge and skills. Thank you to everyone who so enthusiastically participated and made them worthwhile. Training nights are not only about skill development; they are also about staying in touch with AVP and its ethos. They are always thought provoking – and fun. The Acacia sub-committee have done considerable work on the T4F processes and procedures which we look forward to hearing more about in 2012.

The Committee

We have a small but dedicated committee that still manages to accomplish an amazing amount of work. Without the 'behind the scenes' work – keeping the accounts, managing correspondence (electronic and snail mail), keeping the minutes of meetings and most importantly organising workshops, AVP would not be possible. The workshops in particular require significant organisation and could not occur without the tremendous work of many committee and non-committee AVP members. Special thanks must go to Sally and Jim for this aspect, but also to other members of the committee who put so much effort into making workshops happen throughout the year and throughout WA.

The Broome sub-committee continues to operate as does the one at Acacia. These sub-committees greatly reduce the amount of work the Perth-based committee must do. The Acacia sub-committee has been very active and effective this past year and the Broome sub-committee has organised a number of workshops. Their efforts are greatly appreciated.

Social Events

We held a relatively impromptu 'pizza night' get-together during the year that proved to be a good opportunity for people whose current circumstances do not permit them to be actively involved in workshop delivery and/or training to come along and socialise with other AVPers. We hope to continue these in future.

We again held our end of the year gathering at Acacia prison when all inmates who have facilitated or participated in workshops are invited to celebrate with visiting community AVP facilitators.

AVP Internationally and Nationally

Sally Herzfeld continues to fly the flag for AVP-WA. As well as participating in regular skype meetings with the national group she also attended the AVP International in Guatemala in late 2011 and returned with many wonderful stories, pictures and new approaches. We all benefit greatly from Sally's involvement in this way –and we thank her for it.

AVP-WA was very pleased to host the AVP Regional Gathering in January 2012. It was decided at the International Gathering that this should be a Regional Gathering, not just one for Australia and we were delighted to be able to welcome a number of AVP facilitators from around our region. Over 50 AVP facilitators, about half of whom were local, participated over 5 days and included an additional special workshop on Healing Trauma, led by Nadine Hoover from Aceh and the USA. A highlight for many of us, local and non-local, was a half day visit to Acacia which was hosted by our inmate facilitators and attended by senior staff at the prison, including the Director who spoke glowingly about our work there.

The Newsletter

Occasional issues of the Newsletter were also produced during the year. These are a useful way of informing others as well as members about AVP operations. We are now trying to limit the paper versions to save on trees and postage. Thanks to Debbi Rosser for her valuable work on these.

Concluding comments

2011 has been a very successful year for AVP-WA in terms of

- our workshop delivery which is still strong and expanding in their scope
- our finances which are comfortable and well used (thanks to Sally), and
- organisationally in which we continue to manage all that is required of us, including the organisation of the Regional Gathering this year.

Thank you very much to all involved in AVP-WA and most particularly to fellow committee members, Jo Vallentine, Elizabeth Brennan, Michelle McManus, Nick Vassallo and Selene Moonbeams, and others who undertake special tasks. It's great to be a part of this little organisation that makes a big difference to participants and facilitators alike. We're all teachers and we're all learners.

Anna Alderson
Chairperson
January, 2012