

AVP WA CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT 2013

2013 has been a fantastic year for AVP WA.

Thanks to the energy and commitment of the volunteers who make up our organisation, AVP WA has continued to flourish over 2013. We have worked in a new prison, and in new locations. We have run a high number of workshops with a wide range of facilitation teams. We have trained fantastic new facilitators, had impressive ongoing commitment from some longer term facilitators, and have welcomed ex-inmate facilitators into our outside AVP community.

Workshops

In 2013 AVP ran workshops in Acacia Prison, Wooroloo Prison Farm, Karnet Prison Farm, Warnbro High School, Broome Senior High School, with HALO Aboriginal group, at West Kimberley Regional Prison (in Derby), Noonkanbah and Wankutjunka community.

We ran a total of 44 workshops in WA in 2013.

Acacia Prison	14
Wooroloo Prison Farm	4
Karnet Prison Farm	4
Community	11
Schools	6
Kimberley	5

We ran three Indigenous only workshops; a Noongar workshop for teenagers from the Maali Colts football team, and the young men from HALO Aboriginal group, and a Noongar basic in Darlington. AVP also delivered a half day session for young people from Mowanjum community in the Kimberley, when they were in Perth on school holidays, as ground work for workshops in Mowanjum in 2014.

We ran one Peace Leadership multicultural workshop, largely with Iranian participants, organised by two Iranian facilitators. This was a challenging and rewarding workshop as we continue to improve our practices and expand our ideas for working with multicultural groups.

Prison workshops

AVP continues to deliver workshops in Acacia, Wooroloo and Karnet prisons. We have strong teams of AVP inmates who are great facilitators, and some do a significant amount of work inside the prison to organise the workshops. Unfortunately government budget cuts mean that we need to do more voluntary work to keep this valuable prison work happening.

Although some key, long-term AVP facilitators left Acacia in 2013, others have stepped in to take on key roles and we continue to have an active AVP group in Acacia. The inmate facilitators meet independently to continue to grow the AVP network inside the prison.

Several committee members attended NAIDOC week celebrations in Acacia and Wooroloo prisons, and continue to develop good relationships with prison staff. We receive positive feedback anecdotally from staff and feel we are well perceived and respected within the prison system.

AVP Kimberley

AVP Kimberley ran two community workshops, two prison workshops, and one youth workshop over 2013. There are two lead facilitators and eleven apprentice facilitators in Broome, and experienced facilitators from Perth have travelled to the Kimberley to join in facilitation teams.

This was the first year we worked in West Kimberley Regional Prison, where a men's workshop and a women's workshop were held. The prison would like us to continue delivering workshops each school holiday period, although they don't have a budget for AVP.

In 2013 we have developed relationships and built the groundwork for expanding AVP in outback communities – men’s and women’s workshops will be run in Balgo Aboriginal community in 2014. A short video clip has been produced about AVP in the Noonkanbah Aboriginal community in Fitzroy.

AVP Kimberley was a 2013 finalist in the Department of Local Government Communities Regional Achievement and Community Awards, for the Community Group of the Year award.

Warnbro High School

Three workshops were held with the Peer Support group at Warnbro High School over 2013 – a basic, advanced and training for facilitators. Four youth facilitators trained through the Warnbro program joined facilitation teams for these workshops. The program continues to be an endorsed program for Year 10, 11 and 12 students through the School Curriculum and Standards Authority.

In 2013 we started a professional evaluation of AVP workshops in Warnbro High School, to be completed in 2014.

Training Nights

We continued our monthly training nights, to improve our facilitation skills and offer an opportunity for all facilitators to stay engaged in AVP. A range of facilitators contributed to the running of our training sessions. We covered a range of topics in 2013, such as prison workshops, transforming power, non violent communication and supporting new facilitators.

We have had a number of ex-inmates attend training nights on a regular basis, which has provided a supportive environment for the ex-inmate, a good way for them to remain connected to AVP, and has been reinvigorating for us all.

We also ran one training day in Acacia Prison (in addition to our end of year wind up), and held an inaugural training and social night in Karnet Prison Farm.

Peace One Day

AVP was involved in several Peace One Day activities in September, both in Perth and in the Kimberley. We held two prison workshops over this weekend, joined in a peace event held in Forrest Chase, supported Peace activities in a school and AVP Kimberley also held Peace One Day celebrations in Broome.

Presentations

Bheena Sewnarain and Jim Thom gave a presentation on AVP’s Peace Leadership workshops at the Transcultural Mental Health Australasian Refugee Health conference. A number of other committee members gave presentations, or ‘AVP Tasters’ to groups such as the Darlington Club, the Theosophists, a Women’s Health Centre, and TAFE students. We also held a promotional stall at the Darlington Arts Festival in November.

Supporting other areas

Bheena Sewnarain travelled to Nepal for two weeks to join a facilitation team there to run a basic, discernment, and trauma healing workshop. We have also been able to financially support the work of another Australian facilitator who is doing extensive AVP training work in this country. The establishment of a Peace Place where AVP workshops are held in Indonesia needed to borrow money to get set up and this we were glad to do as well as supply AVP manuals to an African National Gathering.

Sally Herzfeld travelled to Adelaide, Darwin, and Alice Springs to assist with the facilitation of basic workshops in each location, as these areas do not yet have sufficiently strong facilitation teams. Nine facilitators attended the national gathering in Silver Wattle in January 2013, where they played a significant role in the facilitation of the gathering, then presented a Training Night on their return to share new ideas and exercises with other AVP WA facilitators.

Sally Herzfeld represents world Education Committee as co-clerk on the International Co-ordinating committee for the International Gathering. Through this, AVP WA management committee has played an active role in supporting the organisation of the AVP International Gathering in Ireland in 2014.

Facilitators

One of AVP's strengths is our incredible diversity of facilitators, both in the community and in prisons. We have a rich range of facilitators, and strong connections and relationships between facilitators.

Through our workshops in 2013, we have trained and then accepted ten new facilitators in the community, three new facilitators in Karnet, and ten new facilitators in Acacia.

Newsletters

Two AVP WA newsletters were produced in 2013, by an AVP facilitator Debbi Rosser. These were both bumper editions, featuring lots of stories and letters from workshop participants, especially inmate participants. These newsletters were distributed electronically to our AVP network mailing list and hard copies circulated to participants in the prisons.

The Committee

The AVP WA Management Committee started out the year with 13 committee members, and ended with a more manageable group of 11.

On a personal note, it has been a privilege to chair the management committee over 2013. I have appreciated the way we make decision by consensus, tackle differences of opinion with honesty, and enjoy working together. I think we are continuing to improve our organisational processes that support the work of AVP.

Concluding comments

This has been another great year for AVP WA. We have enjoyed our successes, but continue to reflect on areas we can improve and continue to grow.

One of our challenges remains supporting and engaging new or disconnected facilitators. We have a large number of trained facilitators but often responsibility for organising and facilitating workshops falls to a core group. In 2013 we have made renewed efforts in this area, with pizza and social time before our training nights, and focusing on this topic in a training night discussion and with the committee. We are considering including a commitment for new facilitators to join a facilitation team at least two times a year, which we would raise in the interview process.

Another ongoing challenge is marketing AVP workshops in the community – significant effort goes into ensuring a community workshop is well attended enough to go ahead. The Management Committee is discussing employing another workshop coordinator part time for six months to organise community workshops and target groups who may benefit most from workshops.

Looking forwards, we are coming up to the twentieth anniversary of AVP in WA in 2014. We are heading for some new opportunities in 2014 – we are looking at working in new areas in WA, developing relationships with additional prisons and to continue to expand and support our facilitator network.

It's a pleasure to be involved in an organisation with such integrity and where our belief in the good in everyone is reflected in everything that we do. The commitment and passion that has been carried through by a group of volunteers from all walks of life is truly inspiring.

Amy Thom, Chair AVP WA
February 2014