



Chairperson's report 2015

2015 has been another fantastic year for AVP WA. We continue to have a strong and diverse network of facilitators and members, growing with new facilitators and new ideas. We delivered 37 workshops this year, in prisons, schools, and the community, involving 32 facilitators.

Prison Workshops

Acacia prison (SERCO managed) remains our strongest prison program, and in fact one of the strongest in the country. AVP is well regarded within the prison and there is always a high demand for workshops. The number of experienced prison facilitators declined in 2015, largely due to the release of several key facilitators. However, others have stepped up to fill their shoes, and we successfully trained a number of strong inmate facilitators who are enthusiastic and have started joining facilitation teams.

The organisation of workshops at Karnet and Woorooloo (Government farm prisons) has been difficult, due the reduction of staff members, communication difficulties, and the lack of a suitable venue. However we held good workshops in each prison, working with both inmate and outmate facilitators and dates have been set for further workshops in 2016.

Mark Newhouse put considerable efforts into negotiating with Casuarina Prison for the opportunity the re-commence AVP, however after seven months we had to abort again, as what they were able to offer in terms of venue and times would not have allowed us to run an effective workshop.

Community and School Workshops

We have run workshops this year at two Perth schools including a Muslim school, with ASeTTs (Association for the Survivors of Torture and Trauma), with a homeless group, and with the wider community.

We have had a number of firsts in 2015: our first time training street people to be facilitators, and our first time training year four students to be facilitators. It's fantastic to continue to increase the diversity of perspectives and experiences in the AVP family.

We have also continued to support AVP both interstate and internationally with Perth facilitators joining less experienced facilitation teams. Sally Herzfeld joined a local facilitation group in Darwin to run two workshops, and we ran a basic workshop in Melbourne after the National Gathering. Sally Herzfeld also travelled to the Philippines and joined a team to run an intensive five workshops in three weeks. This workshop series trained teachers, university staff and young people as facilitators, who have now delivered workshops themselves and AVP Philippines continues to grow.

Management Committee

In 2015 our management committee consisted of nine committee members, although one resigned late in the year due to health and personal reasons.

We have continued to meet monthly and work together well. It is a juggle to balance using consensus and AVP practices within time constraints and with many issues to discuss each meeting, but we do our best to continue with the administration of AVP and to move the organisation forward. We are also very active on emails and make many straightforward decisions by email so that we can proceed between monthly meetings.

Activities of the committee in 2015 included: developing a mentoring system to keep new facilitators or facilitators returning from prison engaged in AVP and to encourage them to progress their facilitation. Two members took part in a White Ribbon Day rally and held a promotional stall. We developed a publicity committee to work to actively promote AVP community workshops, and conducted an engagement survey with all AVP members to continue to improve the way we involve people in AVP.

AVP Kimberley

AVP Kimberley had a quiet year, due to ongoing challenges with the transient population, as facilitators and participants have left the Kimberley. However, we had a number of successes – three workshops were held in the West Kimberley Regional Prison (Derby) women's section, and we trained some inmate facilitators there. We now have Indigenous women inmate facilitators in Derby which is fantastic, and will be a great asset for future workshops. We ran a workshop in a school we had not worked in before in Broome, working with a group of young people with highly challenging behaviours, which stretched us to think on our feet and adapt our program.

AVP Kimberley continued their tradition of running a fantastic Peace One Day event, and they held a big celebration at the beach in Broome, promoting AVP workshops and connecting with other organisations around the town.

Administration

Mark Newhouse has continued his part-time role as AVP Administrator. This has been happening since June 2014. Mark does a great job with the administration involved in organising community workshops, and is the liaison person for Acacia prison. He provides the committee with monthly reports on his progress, and brings issues to each committee meeting for discussion.

Mark now works up to two days per week, as we recognised that he was doing significant additional administration work over and above the share of volunteering that we all carry. We appreciate the fantastic job that Mark has been doing, which has allowed us to improve our processes, and promote community workshops more widely. Having Mark in this role makes a huge difference to our organisation, and we have extended his contract to the end of 2016.

National Gathering

The 2015 National Gathering was held in Melbourne in January, with four Perth facilitators attending. This was a significant National Gathering for us, as one of our long time facilitators Sally Herzfeld presented the Backhouse Lecture, an annual public lecture on contemporary issues held during Quaker Yearly Meeting.

This was a big project. The presentation (and accompanying booklet) was entitled 'This We Can Do: Quaker Faith In Action through the Alternatives to Violence Project'. Sally presented the lecture in true AVP style, involving many other AVP facilitators from around Australia who were present, and featuring a video from an ex-inmate facilitator on his journey with AVP.

As always, the National Gathering was also a great opportunity to share learnings with facilitators from Tasmania, Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales, and to bring new ideas back to WA. When the facilitators returned we held a report back at training night, where we were able to watch highlights of the filmed Backhouse Lecture.

Newsletters/ Website

Our new newsletter editor produced three fantastic newsletter editions which were distributed to all members in the community electronically, and printed and distributed to all prison facilitators in hard copy. These are a great way to share stories, information and upcoming events, and to keep outlying facilitators engaged.

We have continued to update our website with information about workshops and training nights, and uploading newsletters and reports. Mark Newhouse had a radio interview with Sonshine FM, which has also been uploaded to the website.

Training

We continued our monthly training nights, with pizza and catch up time before a training session. Training Nights play an important role in the AVP community, offering a place for connection and support, as well as ensuring that we continue to expand and develop our skills as facilitators. Training Nights are generally well attended by a diverse group of facilitators, including those who facilitate regularly and those whose only contact with AVP is through attending training.

In 2015 we covered a range of topics, including: new exercises, learnings from AVP around the world, reinvigorating old exercises, the power of processing exercises, and exploring the core elements of workshops. We held one training day in Acacia in May, focusing on dealing with challenging workshop situations.

Evaluation

The evaluation project was completed in December 2015. The evaluations presented a report to the committee entitled 'Evaluation of Peaceful Pathways – AVP Youth in Western Australia'. The evaluation focused on a metropolitan high school which ran AVP workshops intensively between 2007 and 2013, and involved interviews with teachers, school staff, and current and previous school students, in an attempt to determine the impact the AVP workshops had made both on individuals and on the culture of the school.

The feedback we received about the quality of the workshops was highly positive. Processes and activities in the workshop were judged to be meaningful and enjoyable, with comments made about all aspects of an AVP workshop.

Positive impacts as a result of the workshops were reported by both students and staff. Most importantly, it was identified that there were increased communication and leadership skills as a result of the workshops, and that the relationships between students and staff were more trusting and equal. Due to organisational difficulties the evaluation involved a small sample size, however the report identified significant and positive impacts on those involved in AVP in the school, both teachers and students.

Conclusion and looking forward

In conclusion, 2015 has been another positive year for us. We have a great depth of experience in our facilitators, but also continue to gain new facilitators with new perspectives and ideas. We have a diversity of cultural backgrounds, age and experiences, contributing to a strong AVP network. We continue to take time to train and reflect together so we can improve our workshops and the way we work together.

On a personal note, 2015 has been a great year for me in AVP. This has been my last year as chair and I have enjoyed learning from challenges and growing into the role over the last three years. It is a privilege to be part of this community, and to work closely with a group of people that is so diverse but committed to working together well on such a great project.

A personal highlight this year, that I suspect is shared by many, was that a couple of experienced AVP facilitators were released from prison and have joined the AVP community on the outside. While this left big shoes to fill for the prison program, this has been fantastic for us on the outside. We enjoyed welcoming them to their first training night with cake, and this contributes to our feeling of being a community together. They attend training nights regularly, along with a number of other ex-inmates, and have given us a sense of optimism and positivity as we continue to grow in AVP together.

Looking forward to 2016, we are excited about the newly formed publicity committee, who are developing ideas to further publicise our community workshops. We have decided we would like to offer AVP in regional prisons, and negotiations are now underway with Bunbury, Albany and Greenough prisons. We have some inmate facilitators in these prisons, and often receive requests from participants who are being transferred.

The ongoing, generous support of our anonymous donor has continued to make our growing work possible, and we are greatly appreciative of this.

Amy Thom
AVP WA Chairperson
March 2016

Appendix – Workshop figures

Number of workshops			
Type	Basic	Adv	T4F
Acacia	7	4	3
Karnet	1	1	
Wooroloo	1		
Community	3	2	1
Special community	3	1	1
Kimberley	1	1	
HIPP (school)	5	1	1

Number of participants						
Type	Basic		Adv		T4F	
	No.	Avg	No.	Avg	No.	Avg
Acacia	107	15	56	14	16	5
Karnet	15	15	10	10		
Wooroloo	16	16				
Community	24	8	14	7	12	12
Special community	29	10	3	3	3	3
Kimberley	11	11	11	11	3	3
HIPP (school)	114	23	27	27	8	8

Number of facilitators trained		
	Apprentice	Assistant
Acacia	9	4
Community	9	1
Special community	1	1
HIPP (school)	8	
Derby prison	3	

No. of workshops	No. of facilitators
1	16
2	4
3	1
4	6
>4	5