

AVP WA Chairperson's report for 2019



2019 was another very successful year for AVP WA.

We ran 47 workshops in prisons, schools and the community, and we once again assisted with programmes in Darwin and Alice Springs.

Prison Workshops

As in previous years, there was a high demand for AVP workshops in Acacia. However, we have been disappointed to lose our two inmate coordinators there. Fortunately another inmate has now stepped into the role. We are also disappointed with new restrictions placed on some inmate facilitators and participants due to categorisation issues, despite our best attempts to remove several category bans.

Karnet and Wooroloo Prison Farms have each hosted 6 workshops in 2019, and the facilitator base in both prisons is good, with 10 currently in Karnet and 15 in Wooroloo.

We have trained several new facilitators in Bunbury Regional Prison, where the programme is very popular and well received. However, as we are not able to conduct many workshops there (four last year) due to facilitator availability, many participants and facilitators end up leaving before they manage to facilitate a workshop. Despite this, we feel the programme is very successful there, and inmate feedback reflects this.

See the Administrator's summary of 2019 for more details on prison workshops.

Community and School Workshops

In 2019, there were 9 workshops throughout the city and hills regions, 3 in the Pilbara and one in Northam, resulting in 14 newly trained facilitators. We also had a series of 3 HIPP workshops with Year 4s at Helena College Junior School, and 1 Basic and a T4F youth workshop at Edmund Rice College in Bindoon.

Management Committee

In 2019, there were ten members on our management committee. These were Selene Moonbeams (Chair), Bheena Sewnarain (Deputy Chair), Niki MacLennan (Minute-taker), Collette Chesters (Treasurer), Sally Herzfeld (Assistant Treasurer), Mark Newhouse, Greg Rusha, Jim Thom, Merrill Stokes, Ghazal Attar (General committee members).

We continue to meet monthly alternating between Mount Lawley and Darlington, and also exchange emails between meetings in order to make decisions which can't be held off until the following month's meeting. An hour and a half for each meeting never seems to be sufficient time to adequately deal with all the issues that arise.

Administration

Mark Newhouse has once again, been invaluable in his part-time employment as AVP WA Administrator in 2019, and the committee was unanimous in their decision to renew his contract for 2020.

Mark does a wonderful job performing many administrative tasks, including website updates, keeping workshop kits well stocked, maintaining a complete database of facilitators and ensuring prison clearances are updated. He also liaises with prison staff and ensures as far as possible, the smooth scheduling of workshops. This includes not only confirming dates for workshops and putting facilitation teams together, but also ensuring inmate and community facilitators get together for team preps and that reports are sent to staff and inmate facilitators as soon as possible after each workshop.

He submits a monthly report to the committee.

Training and Celebrations

Last year, we trialled Saturday training days four times during the year. Jim and Merrill coordinated these, and all but one were well attended. We put the low attendance down to the fact that we had celebrated our 25 years of AVP WA the previous week.

The committee considers these training nights to be important for facilitator connection, fun and honing of skills. The Saturday trial was considered a great success, so we are continuing it in 2020.

On Saturday 21st September, we celebrated 25 years of AVP in Western Australia. This was very well attended and included three of the original facilitators from the first Casuarina workshop, Merril, David and Jo. Sadly, this was the last opportunity most of us had to see our much loved friend and fellow facilitator Peter Fry, but it was wonderful to see him and hear some of his AVP memories. We did manage to give him a final "Round of Applause". Peter is very much missed.

Catering for the celebration was provided free of charge by the Acacia prison catering workers, which further strengthened the link between AVP and the prison.

Our lively Christmas celebration in Mount Lawley was very well attended, and we were delighted to have a number of ex-inmate facilitators join us.

We also held one training and Christmas gathering in Acacia: one session with Mainstream and one with Protection facilitators and assistants. These gatherings help inmate and community facilitators stay connected, and the prison facilitators appreciate these days.

Australian, Regional and International AVP

During 2019, regular Zoom meetings were held in order to share happenings and ideas from around the country and overseas. Information and queries are often then fed back to the AVP WA committee by those of us who attend these meetings.

May Trust

Once again, we received a considerable sum of money from our anonymous donor. It is this that has allowed us to fund our part time administrator and conduct workshops in prisons throughout the state. It has also helped to reimburse transport costs for facilitators, sponsor two AVP WA facilitators to attend the Australian National Training Gathering in Sydney in April 2019, and sponsor facilitators to travel to Alice Springs and Darwin to support their emerging programmes. Thanks to our generous donor, we have been able to sponsor four experienced facilitators to attend the 2020 Australian National Training Gathering in Launceston, Tasmania.

We are extremely grateful for this ongoing financial and moral support, as it is central to the success and scope of our extensive AVP programme.

Personal Reflections

Being Chair of AVP WA for my third year has continued to be a challenging, but rewarding experience for me. It is a privilege to work with such a committed and inspirational team of volunteers.

I am constantly in awe of the continued dedication of committee members in performing not only their considerable roles on the committee, but also finding time to facilitate workshops throughout the year.

Of course, AVP WA could not flourish as well as it has this past year without the dedicated team of facilitators who volunteered their time and energy to facilitate workshops throughout the year. Their commitment to the collective desired outcome of a more peaceful world is extremely admirable.

Thank you for your confidence in me as Chairperson for 2019, and I wish the new committee another very successful year ahead.

Selene Moonbeams
AVP WA Chairperson
1 February 2020