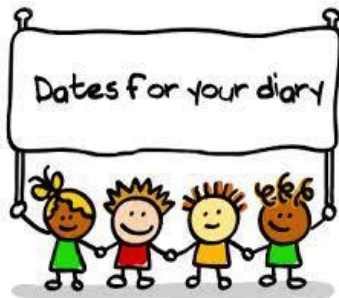


AVP WA NEWSLETTER SPRING 2021



Upcoming Workshops

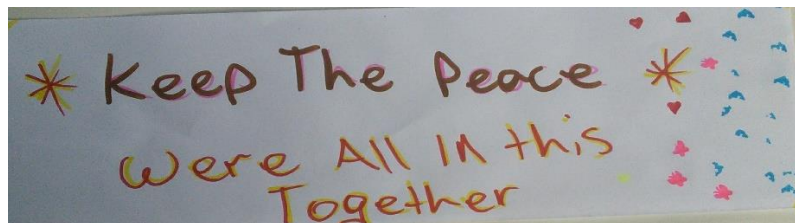


- Oct 9, 16: Community Advanced – Osborne Park*
- Oct 16 – 18: Acacia mainstream Advanced*
- Nov 6 – 8: Acacia protection T4F*
- Nov 9 – 11: Bunbury Prison Basic*
- Nov 13, 20: Community T4F – Osborne Park*
- Nov 13, 20: Community Basic – Darlington*
- Nov 16 – 18: Karnet Basic*
- Nov 20 – 22: Acacia mainstream T4F*
- Nov 29 – Dec 1: Woorloo Advanced*
- Dec 6 – 8: Woorloo T4F*

Training Day

Saturday Oct 2: 10am – 3pm @ Quaker Meeting House

If you'd like to be involved in any of these workshops, please contact Mark, our administrator (Details end of newsletter).



Evaluation of the AVP Program at Acacia Prison

Mark Newhouse (AVP-WA Administrator)

In March 2018, AVP-WA applied for, and was approved, a Lotteries West grant of \$10 000 for the purposes of contracting a research team to conduct an evaluation of our prison program at Acacia Prison. Later that year, we signed an agreement with Edith Cowan University (ECU) for two of their senior researchers in Criminology to conduct this project, which was to be completed during 2019. However, ECU were unable to obtain the necessary approvals from the Department of Justice so the project was delayed until the start of 2020. Then COVID hit! This interrupted our prison program and hence the research project. It was finally completed in late 2020 when we received the report from ECU.

The report, entitled 'Evaluation of the Alternatives to Violence Program at Acacia Prison in Western Australia' which was written by the researchers Associate Professor Pamela Henry & Dr Natalie Gately, is available on our website avpwa.org.

A summary of the report was presented and discussed at a community training day in August this year and then again at an Acacia training day in September.

Research questions

1. Does participation in the Basic AVP increase self-esteem, skills in communication, cooperation and conflict resolution and reduce anger in prison populations?
2. How do prisoners perceive the AVP experience?

A mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative) approach was employed.

There were 78 participants overall – some of these completed pre and/or post surveys; some attended interviews or focus groups. There were 35 participants who completed both the pre and post tests and thus included in the statistical analysis. There were 39 who participated in a post-Basic interview. There were 9 who participated in post-Advanced focus groups. There were 6 who participated in a post-T4F focus group.

Summary of key findings

- Those who participated in all 3 levels of workshops showed the greatest insight and described it as the most beneficial program they had experienced in a custodial setting
- There was a statistically significant decrease in perceptions of anger after the Basic workshop. The findings suggest that the Basic AVP may help participants to recognise when a situation is escalating feelings of anger and provides the tools required to successfully deescalate.
- There were improvements (not statistically significant) in self-esteem, communication, cooperation and management of conflict after the Basic workshop
- Many were motivated to attend by getting a certificate to aid parole, although they still derived benefit from participating
- The program was generally described as rewarding and beneficial
- There was a perception that the skills acquired were more beneficial for life outside the prison, not within it
- There was an inaccurate perception from some that the program was derived from a Primary School one and thus not age-appropriate
- AVP was described as 'fun' and participants identified particular tasks that enabled them to reflect on who they had become and why

Recommendations made by the report writers

1. Consider acknowledging the different motivations for enrolling in the course at the start of all AVP programs. The motivation is irrelevant as this may change across time and there is no escaping the fact that the primary motivation for the majority of participants will be to secure parole. Addressing these issues prior to commencing the course might expedite an open exchange between participants and facilitators because participants will be less likely to feel that they need to hide their true motivation to ensure progression to the Advanced and Facilitators AVP. Therefore, they may be less likely to provide what is perceived to be a socially desirable response.

AVP-WA responses to recommendations

At the start of the Basic workshop, prior to the first gathering, we ought to be more explicit about participants' motivations, acknowledging that many attend to get a certificate to aid parole; that this is ok; that many nevertheless find benefit in the workshop; that the Prisoner Review Board does not directly recognise AVP workshops.

Acacia Facilitators responses to recommendations

- Agreement – the motivation is irrelevant because the results are positive overall
- There is stigma against opening up and parole as a motivation may be a front

- Encourage openness
 - Don't remove people who indicate that their motivation is parole
 - Focus on promoting communication
 - Parole is the overriding motivation for all prisoners at first
 - Having participants admit they only had parole in mind may be detrimental as lower expectations get lower interaction
2. Consider providing participants with a clear explanation of how the AVP is different to the range of programs prisoners are required to participate in. Consider also explaining how the Basic, Advanced and Facilitators courses are distinguished from each other, and build on each other. Participants will then be aware of potential overlap of course content and understand that the purpose is to explore these areas in greater depth. Currently, the course is limited to three days. Skills are introduced in the Basic AVP and consolidated in the Advanced AVP. Additional skills are introduced in the Advanced AVP and should perhaps be consolidated in the Facilitators AVP prior to shifting the focus to helping others. Despite this issue, participants are not aware how skills are scaffolded, or how courses are differentiated and as a consequence, see aspects of these courses as a waste of limited time.

AVP-WA responses to recommendations

We ought to emphasise the focus is on experiences, rather than skill development. We hope participants will learn more about themselves and means of conflict resolution. Perhaps we should review our introduction in the Basic workshop.

Acacia Facilitators responses to recommendations

- Some of the data collected may be partial eg. Mood, own experience within the program and facilitators. also depends on individual mindset
 - We currently have a section explaining the nature of the program as well as "where to next" with space for questions and discussion
 - We accept that the structure of all three courses are similar, however the content does differentiate. Also, consolidating the information is part of the learning process and does help retain the information.
 - We don't really provide new skills until participants reach the T4F and exercises alone during the Advanced are brought back in the T4F.
 - The AVP team focus more on experiential rather than teaching
 - We do tell them the nature of workshop/philosophy
 - Voluntary, so different – no resentment about attending
 - Three days adequate
 - Experiential – no skills till T4F
 - Not aware of how scaffolded until T4F
3. Consider providing participants with clear learning outcomes at the commencement of all tiers of the AVP. Participants currently have a limited understanding of what they should take away from the course (i.e., learn).

AVP-WA responses to recommendations

We believe that 'learning outcomes' are not relevant. However, we could invite participants to make their own notes and personal reflections at the end of each exercise, prior to moving on.

Acacia Facilitators responses to recommendations

- Explain the basis of AVP and what it means when its experiential
- More of a personal understanding of themselves than what AVP offers
- Lack of knowledge of the words to use when expressing feelings/thoughts
- Comfortability

- Some will/wont grasp the concept due to different learning walk
 - AVP is self-discovery/personal growth
 - Agree – come in blind to Basic.
 - Disagree - Next tiers have an understanding of outcomes
 - Learning outcomes develop throughout the course
4. Consider incorporating age appropriate activities that provide participants with an opportunity to practice and further develop the skills being targeted. Ensure that instruction is provided during the conduct of activities, and at the conclusion of activities to ensure that participants understand the purpose of the activity, and how they could have generated a better outcome.

AVP-WA responses to recommendations

During the processing of an exercise, we could ask participants what they think was the purpose of that exercise. Facilitators need to be clear in their own minds about the purpose of the exercise.

Acacia Facilitators responses to recommendations

- Stress reduction
 - Discharge trauma by moving around, having a laugh; calms the body
 - Size of the group that was interviewed by ECU wasn't great enough to see the whole picture
 - Participants do understand outcomes
 - Some L&Ls seen as childish – respect process and value of exercise
 - All activities are age appropriate
 - Participants do understand activity and instruction appropriate
 - Everyone learns differently; their outcomes are their outcomes
 - Some have different abilities to learn
 - Some are more open to change
 - Some participate just for parole
5. Consider revising course content and learning outcomes to ensure that aspects of the content and anticipated outcomes are tailored to the needs of specific prisoner cohorts. This will ensure that all categories of prisoners are able to identify the specific benefits to be derived by them. For example, those with a life sentence are less likely to reap the rewards of improved relationships with family and friends outside of the prison environment. Those to benefit from improved relationships with prisoners inside prison are most likely new prisoners adjusting to the prison environment. Improvements with relationships with prison guards might occur because compliance is accepted as required and therefore more likely. More broadly, all AVP courses should be contextualized to the prison environment.

AVP-WA responses to recommendations

We don't believe that we should try to cater for sub-categories of prisoners. We don't believe that we need to contextualise the content of the workshop to prison.

Acacia Facilitators responses to recommendations

- This recommendation seems to ignore the fact that the AVPs function is to address a broad range of conflict resolution
- The idea that the workshops should be tailored to specific types of prisoners seems counter-productive to the community building aspect of the AVP
- The AVP aim isn't to develop a better relationship with staff and officers so we are unsure as to the specific relevance
- The response regarding life sentence prisoners are less likely to reap the rewards of improved relationships with friends and family is inaccurate. I myself as a lifer have developed a greater understanding of myself and certain family members allowing external prison relationships to develop.

- The study seems to miss the mark a bit. The AVP isn't a one stop shop for conflict resolution, it's a program that requires regular involvement to address constant and diverse issues related to conflict resolution
 - The idea for the AVP to be contextualised for the prison environment is a terrible idea
 - external facilitators wouldn't be able/qualified to facilitate workshops tailored to prison
 - the AVP builds a bridge between internal and external environments through conflict resolution
 - beneficial to any individual, to long-term and short-term inmates
 - may help relationships with prison officers but not because inmates are more compliant
 - contextualised to the prison environment – applies to prison and community – can help family relationships no matter who they are
6. Consider reviewing the number of topics explored in the Advanced AVP so that depth of learning can occur.

AVP-WA responses to recommendations

In the Advanced workshop, we ought to keep the selected topics to only one or two to allow greater depth of exploration.

Acacia Facilitators responses to recommendations

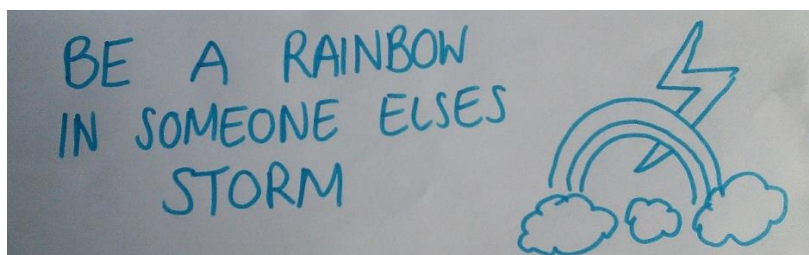
- Too many topics
 - Many participants not getting their choice recognised
 - Topic flagged, then condensed by consensus so some participants miss out on having their say or the topic chosen doesn't suit their needs
 - Solution? Put topics into categories (like the feelings wheel)
 - Suggest 2 topic maximum
 - Problem of participants not getting topic of their choice
7. Consider the regular review of the content delivered by facilitators. A number of participants incorrectly described the history of the course and the nature and purpose of the activities engaged in.

AVP-WA responses to recommendations

We may need to review the presentation of the 'History of AVP'

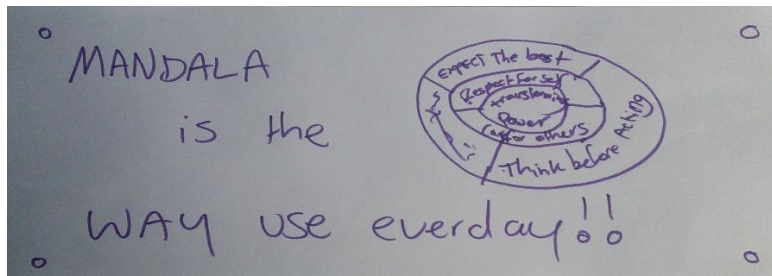
Acacia Facilitators responses to recommendations

- Have notes. Course notes – provide the information
- Visual presentation
- Oh really??!!
- L&Ls are needed; explain why they are needed
- Time constraints
- Usually do give the purpose



From an inmate at Wooroloo Prison Farm

To de-escalate tension, I simply act as a guest. In doing this, I am able to stay mindful of my manners, mannerisms, body language and composure.



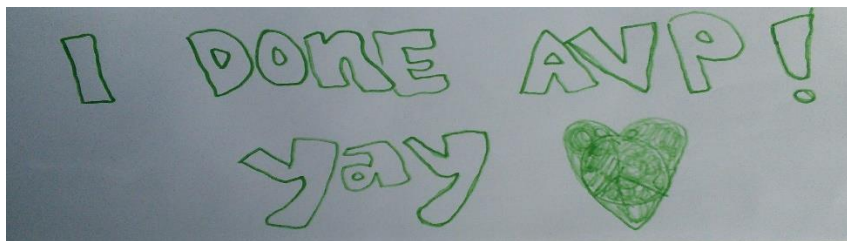
Keeping in Touch

Jim Thom

AVP WA has trained lots of facilitators since it started in 1994. Unfortunately we often lose contact with one another over the years as our lives become busy and our interests change direction.

There are ways to keep in touch for those who wish to do. We have a great website with lots of information (www.avpwa.org), we have an active Facebook page (www.facebook.com/AVPWA/) and for those wanting to post items or discuss various issues we have a Facebook chat page (www.facebook.com/groups/900610813783431).

If you have been out of the loop for sometime but feel you would like to re-engage please get in touch (email avp.wa1@gmail.com, phone 0490 830 255. We do ask those who haven't facilitated for some time to repeat a workshop as a participant for a refresher. However facilitating AVP workshops as part of a team can be rewarding and a great learning experience.



AVP Alice Springs

Selene Moonbeams

In June this year, I went to Alice Springs to help facilitate four workshops with Diana, who is the anchor facilitator and coordinator of AVP Alice Springs.

The four workshops included a T4F in the men's prison, a Basic in the women's prison, a community Basic over two Saturdays, and a Basic with the Alternatives To Custody programme (ATC), which consisted of six mornings over a two week period. While I was there, we also conducted a training day in the men's prison and a Saturday morning stall in the local shopping centre to stimulate interest in the upcoming community workshop. We ended up with four participants in that workshop, two of whom I met and enrolled when I went hiking on the Larapinta Track for a few days between workshops! 😊

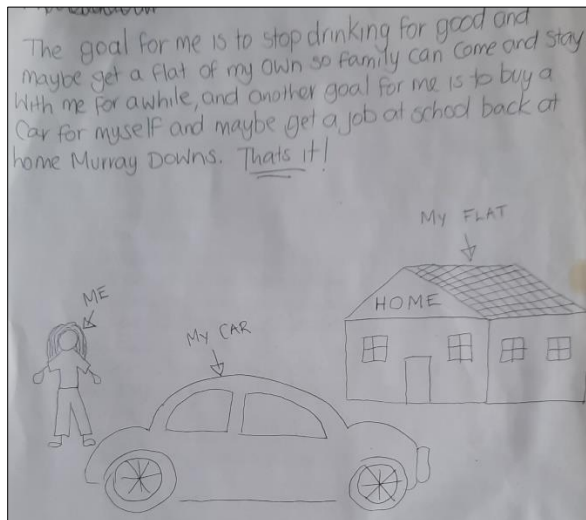
All of the participants in the two prison workshops and the ATC workshop were indigenous to the area, and spoke several different languages. This made facilitation challenging at times, and we had to adjust many of the activities accordingly. For example, for the small group activities, we asked the participants to choose groups they were happy to work with and invited them to communicate in their own language. The role plays were likewise done largely in their own languages.

In the ATC workshop, one of the participants brought her 18 month old daughter to all sessions, and she very quickly became part of the group, with all the women (including the facilitators) participating in the “Parenting” of the child. This was very rewarding for us all.

There were many challenges with all of the workshops, but overall we felt that they were well received, and the ATC workshop was particularly satisfying. The Alternatives To Custody programme has been introduced as a trial to keep indigenous women out of prison, and inmates have many more freedoms than do their counterparts in the main prison. We discovered that there are many challenges within this programme, and time will tell whether the programme continues and is extended to the men in the community. The photos below are from the ATC workshop and the women are delighted to share these with you. I made a laminated collage of these photos for the women as a memento of their workshop.

A particular highlight for me was using the wooden mandala which my son Pete and I designed and made for AVP Alice Springs. This has been beautifully painted by an indigenous inmate artist (see below), and is very much valued by the prison.





Jailbreak!



At a recent meeting, the committee decided that we should stop offering this light and lively in prison workshops. This is a health and safety issue. Sometimes the participants become too competitive and several chairs have been lost as a result. There is considerable potential for someone to be hurt. So, sad though it is, because it can be great fun, it is best if we substitute another.

Port Hedland Basic July 2021



Editor's note

A newsletter is published every quarter. If you have any news, photos, inmate contributions or new things you've tried in workshops, please send them to our newsletter editor Selene Moonbeams. selenemoonbeams@gmail.com

Need more information?

For details of upcoming workshops or training, to volunteer to help facilitate a workshop, or just to find out more about AVP, please contact our administrator Mark Newhouse. 0400 231 151 avp.wa1@gmail.com