

ALTERNATIVES TO VIOLENCE PROJECT WA INC

Annual Report of the Chair for 2022

Introduction

2022 was the 28th year of the Alternatives to Violence Project in WA. We had some challenges, but overall it was a busy and successful year. In summary some of our achievements are listed below:

- Have run 29 workshops.
- Held training sessions in and out of prison
- Have trained inmate facilitators
- Have had regular committee meetings
- Maintained a current website
- Maintained an active Facebook page
- Circulated regular newsletters to facilitators and supporters
- Continued to wrestle with prison clearances
- A treasurer managing several different accounts
- A part time administrator
- Have helped organise and participated in national and international gatherings
- Updated our written policies and procedures
- Introduced two new polices – one on facilitator care and one on COVID procedures
- Sat on national and international committees
- Provided some support to AVP in Zimbabwe
- Attended several expos and festivals to promote AVP

Workshops

We held a total of twenty nine workshops during the year in prisons and the community. Twenty four of these were in four different prisons and 5 in the community. We trained and accepted 11 new inmate facilitators.

Details can be found in the administrators report.

Prisons Clearances

Obtaining clearances for our outmate facilitators is proving to be our major challenge. This is due partly to confusing and changing processes in the Department of Justice and partly due to understaffing (see administrators report for details). The outcome is that we have less facilitators able to enter the prisons and newer facilitators are not able to experience prison workshops.

Facilitator Days

We decided to rename our training sessions as facilitator days to emphasise that although the focus is on training they also serve the important function of allowing facilitators to get to know one another and network. We held four sessions during the year.

Facebook/Newsletter/Website

One of our challenges is getting information out to the general public as well as our own facilitators and supporters. I would like to thank Selene Moonbeams for her work with Facebook. We have daily inspiring and informative posts which have attracted the page a large following. We also boost various posts to target audiences and ensure that our community workshops are well organised. Thanks also to Michael who has produced several newsletters throughout the year. Thanks to Mark Newhouse for maintaining our website. This site is a font of information for the general public but also for AVP facilitators who can log into the members only area and access manuals and other training tools.

AVP Australia

This group which connects AVP people around Australia has Zoom meetings on the second Wednesday of each month. We ensure that at least one of our committee attends each time. AVPWA helped to organise and participated in a virtual Zoom conference in May.

AVP International

Once again AVP International held a virtual world gathering in which several AVPWA facilitators presented and participated. We hope soon we will be able to hold an in person international gathering. Many thanks to our local facilitator Sally Herzfeld who serves on several International committees:

1. **International Co-ordinating Committee:** All sub committees report to this one. They would LOVE to have more members with special interests such as Finances, Marketing and getting donations etc, to help spread AVP to needy countries.
2. **International Research Committee:** collecting comments from AVP groups around the World about new ideas on the way AVP is run – when and how to cover the requirements for a certain level of workshop - The pros and cons of doing two hours one night each week for ten weeks and similar ideas.
3. **International Education Committee:** working on the Red and Blue Manuals. To see these, click on 'AVP-I Online Libraries'. We are also looking at the possibility of a condensed manual which will cover the Basic, Advanced and T4F. They have our WA examples of condensed manuals. Facilitators are invited to join the Education Advisory Council, to share ideas.

The Committee

Our committee worked together well and respectfully during the year. There was lots of enthusiasm and sharing of the workload. We have adapted to hybrid meetings where a proportion of members attend via Zoom, This is facilitated by the use of the “Meeting Owl” technology lent to us by the Religious Society of Friends.

Our committee during the year was:

Jim Thom (Chairperson)
Bheena Sewnarain (Deputy Chairperson)
Collette Chester (Treasurer)
Sue Mulholland (Minute Taker)
Merril Stokes (Ordinary Member)
Rebecca Tarrant (Ordinary Member)
Sally Herzfeld (Deputy Treasurer)
Wayne MacKay (Ordinary Member)
Michael Hislop (Ordinary Member)
Mark Newhouse (Ordinary Member)

I would like to thank the 2022 committee for their hard work and commitment during the year.

Our Challenges

I think the organisation is facing four main challenges, some of which are inter-related:

- 1) Difficulties in obtaining prison clearances from the Department of Justice.
- 2) Training new facilitators in the community. Although our administrator has an extensive publicity strategy for community workshops we still find it difficult to attract participants.
- 3) Workshops being cancelled. 18 workshops were cancelled in 2022. Some were due to COVID restrictions within the prisons, but others were due to lack of facilitators for the prisons or lack of participants for community workshops.(for details see Administrator's Report)
- 4) Retaining the engagement of new facilitators, both within the community and on release from prison. This is exacerbated by the challenge of difficulty with prison clearance in that new facilitators face a considerable delay before they can facilitate inside.

The Future

Despite the challenges above I am optimistic about the future for AVPWA. We are a group of volunteers motivated mainly by a desire for peace and an enjoyment of the workshop processes which bring a group of diverse participants together into a cohesive community. The committee and others in the group generally are willing to put in a lot of thought and effort to overcome such challenges.

We are considering putting in a proposal to hold the 2025 International gathering in Western Australia if our rather rigorous visa requirements are acceptable to the International body.

As well as our usual facilitator days, we also intend to hold some sessions of advanced training in topics such as active listening and managing conflict. These have been offered to us by a participant who has much experience in the area.

We also hope to hold Zoom workshops, using a model that has proved successful on the east coast, with remote towns and communities in North West WA.

In essence AVPWA continues to have a positive effect in Western Australia, particularly within the prison system. I am grateful to all our volunteer facilitators, both inmates and community, who put in the enthusiasm, energy and time to make the workshops happen.