

Chairperson's report 2014

2014 has been another strong year for AVP WA. This year marked the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of AVP in Western Australia. We held a celebratory event in Moore River in May, where a number of facilitators gathered to reflect on our strengths, where we would like to grow, and what we would like AVP WA to achieve over the next twenty years.

Workshops and facilitators

We ran 43 workshops over 2014. We have been creative and flexible with our approach, as we ran a range of workshops in different locations, including Helena College Junior School, Rockingham Montessori High School, Warnbro SHS, a young men and young women's workshop with Aboriginal youth, community workshops, Derby women's prison, refugee and community mixed workshops, and with remote Aboriginal communities in the Kimberley.

Type	Basic	Adv	T4F
Acacia	8	4	2
Karnet	3	2	1
Wooroloo	2	1	1
Community	2	2	2
Kimberley	5	1	1
School	4		
HALO	2		

26 facilitators were involved in workshops over 2014, with seven lead facilitators highly engaged in four or more workshop teams. We have 42 facilitators in our database who consider themselves to be active facilitators.

No. of workshops	No. of facilitators
1	11
2	6
3	2
4	4
>4	3

Taster sessions or promotional stalls were held with Soroptimists, Psychologists for Peace, Mayors for Peace, White Ribbon Day and Carramar Family Day.

Prison workshops

We have continued to facilitate in Acacia, Wooroloo and Karnet prisons, with a prison liaison representative for each prison.

Acacia remains our strongest prison program. We have an active, experienced inmate facilitator base in Acacia, who meet independently and are responsible for most for the work of organising workshops, which we greatly appreciate. Workshops in Karnet and Wooroloo have also been going well, though we are experiencing difficulties in Karnet and Wooroloo prison, as there are not enough prison staff for us to hold workshops on the weekend, which is when the majority of our facilitators are available. Our prisons liaisons have been persistent and we hope to continue strong programs in these prisons in 2015.

Committee

We had a strong AVP WA Management Committee again in 2014, with eight committee members. We continued to hold monthly committee meetings, with general meetings on the months that we have training days in Acacia.

In 2014 the committee developed a number of new policies and procedures, such as guidelines for the use of AVP funds, a process to mentor new community facilitators, a policy of clearer expectations of training and commitment from new facilitators, and an improved interview and feedback process.

The committee worked well together. We strive to work and discuss efficiently, as our time is always limited, but we also give consideration to issues where needed.

Administration

One of our most significant developments was the appointment of a paid administrator to work for AVP WA one day a week.

Mark Newhouse was appointed as administrator in June 2014 initially for six months, and following review his contract has been renewed until the end of 2015. Mark is also a committee member, and has been an AVP facilitator since 2009.

Mark's role is mainly to coordinate the program of AVP workshops. This involves maintaining active communication with all AVP facilitators, promoting and expanding the scope of community workshops, liaising with prison administrations and engaging with other organisations to provide workshops.

Mark spent considerable time negotiating with Casuarina prison, as we were hoping to re-enter the prison where we began our AVP work in WA. However, after long discussions it was found that running workshops here was not viable, which was a disappointment for us.

The appointment of a paid administrator has made a huge difference for our organisation. It has lightened the load of several key committee members, streamlined our processes, and allowed us to develop new relationships and explore new areas to take AVP.

Kimberley

AVP Kimberley, based in Broome, has continued to work to overcome challenges in 2014. We are pleased to have been able to reach more remote Aboriginal communities this year and to have continued our work with women in the Derby prison.

The facilitator group has grown to 15 active apprentice facilitators. However, there are only three lead facilitators, one of whom would be required on each workshop to make up a strong team.

AVP Kimberley held Peace One Day celebrations again, with a display in the local library, and a sunset event held at Cable Beach.

In an effort to attract participants, AVP Kimberley has published advertisements in the local newspaper once a fortnight (for the first time), and ongoing promotions with an article on the Balgo workshop in the KAMSH bulletin, weekly feature in the community notice board, and a new Facebook page. Blackfella Films has recorded a men's basic workshop in Balgo, which is yet to be released.

AVP Kimberley has an active, consistent committee which oversees the organisation and maintains momentum. However, two members will be leaving next year, so the committee will need to continue to grow and adapt with these changes.

International and National Gathering

The National Gathering was held in Brisbane in January, and four AVP WA members attended, three part-funded. AVP WA played a significant role in developing the agenda and facilitating the sessions. The national gathering explored a range of issues, including reviewing the new facilitator and further training manual which has been recently published by the education committee.

The AVP International Gathering was held in Dublin, Ireland in July. Seven members of AVP WA attended the conference. AVP part-funded all seven. Members received part funding through an application process assessed by the committee. We also provided sponsorship to a Nepalese representative, as the next International Gathering or Regional Gathering will be in Nepal.

The International Gathering consisted of 150 participants from 43 countries, and was a fantastic experience for all those who attended. We received verbal and written reports from the WA facilitators that attended, and learnt of issues discussed and new exercises at a feedback session.

Again, AVP WA members had a significant input into the International Gathering. Sally Herzfeld is on the International Gathering planning committee, and many of us facilitated sessions, such as reporting on our evaluation, dealing with team conflicts, the importance of listening, new light and lively exercises, presenting Transforming Power, and exploring the new training manuals. With the help of funding from around Australia, we were able to send an Aboriginal facilitator to Ireland. Bringing his didgeridoo, positive energy and strong facilitation skills, he was a great ambassador from the work we do in Australia, and has been invited to join facilitation teams in other countries.

The Western Australian AVP program is highly regarded internationally, and sharing our experiences and what we have learnt has been appreciated.

Training

We continued with our monthly training nights. Topics have included examining recommendations from workshop reports and participant evaluations, supporting our participants, the essence of AVP, drafting new agendas for advanced workshops, post training for facilitators training, and exploring what makes a good facilitator. We also received reports back and learnt new exercises from the national and international gatherings.

We have a significant attendance from ex-inmate facilitators at monthly training nights, which is valuable for all of us and makes a difference for everyone who attends. Training nights have a supportive, family atmosphere, and it's a useful chance to strengthen and maintain our connections and continue to improve our facilitation skills.

We held two training days in Acacia prison, and an end of year wind up. The training days in Acacia were largely led and organised by the inmate facilitator group, exploring topics such as how to present an exercise presenting the causes, circumstances, choices and consequences of violence, and we discussed issues raised from the national and international gatherings.

Newsletters and Website updates

Two local WA newsletters were produced, and one national. We receive a number of international newsletters and they are a great way to share information amongst international network.

We have also updated our website (www.avpwa.org) and are continuing to improve and update this as required.

Evaluation

In 2014 we funded an evaluation of our AVP work at a high school between 2007 and 2013. During that time the AVP Youth Program was an Endorsed subject with the state Standards, Curriculum and Assessment Authority and for Years 10, 11 and 12 in WA schools. Over the seven years, 225 students completed the Basic, 64 students completed the Advanced and 32 students were trained as facilitators.

The evaluation approach used a mix of qualitative methods. The evaluation was based primarily on interviews with teaching and non-teaching school staff who had completed AVP facilitator training, staff who had not been involved but had some knowledge, current students who had completed the workshops, experienced AVP facilitators who had been involved, and the school psychologist (also a trained AVP facilitator).

The evaluation reported a range of positive impacts, including the development of social skills, self confidence, developing a wider circle of friends, improving leadership, communication, and conflict resolution skills. Participants commented that the workshops created a safe and fun environment, and that the activities were valuable with real life application. The high quality of facilitator and leaders was also noted.

Participants also saw value in learning facilitation skills. The activities in general were seen to be meaningful and affirming and participants learnt how to give and receive feedback. Participants appreciated the development of trust and the importance placed on confidentiality. Many noted the difference in the relationship between adults and students PP compared to their school experiences.

The evaluation study indicates that AVP made a significant and positive impact on those involved, both students and staff. The full report will be completed by May 2015.

Conclusion and looking forwards

It has been another enjoyable year working with such a diverse and strong group of people.

AVP is made up of a great group of AVP facilitators, made stronger by our range of experience and freshness, young and old, and different backgrounds. We have built good relationships and work to support each other well. With our new administrator and a strong committee, we have reached out and encouraged facilitators to join training nights and facilitation teams to maintain and refresh their skills, and it has been fantastic to welcome some new facilitators.

We are looking forward to the challenges and rewards that 2015 holds for us.

We will continue to explore ways to support our facilitators and grow AVP. We are considering establishing a publicity group, and holding an AVP "open day" where we can share our work with other organisations. We struggle with how we can continue to grow, while remaining a grass-roots organisation.

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

On a personal note, I have enjoyed my involvement in AVPWA. Attending both the National Gathering in Brisbane and the International Gathering in Dublin, this year I have gained the perspective that our work here in Perth is part of an international, dynamic movement that really is making a difference around the world.

Amy Thom
AVP WA Chair