

ALTERNATIVES TO VIOLENCE PROJECT WA INC

Annual Report of the Chair for 2024

Introduction

2024 was the 30th year of the Alternatives to Violence Project in WA. We celebrated this with an event in September that was well attended by facilitators past and present. It was a busy and successful year. In summary some of our achievements are listed below:

- Have run 42 workshops.
- Organised a 30th anniversary celebration
- Held training sessions in and out of prison
- Trained inmate facilitators
- Had regular committee meetings
- Maintained an active Facebook page
- Circulated regular newsletters to facilitators and supporters
- Had a treasurer managing several different accounts

I would like to thank:

- All facilitators both inmates and community for their dedication.
- Our funders who have generously supported us over many years
- The staff at the various prisons in which we work who help us navigate the sometimes complex regulations
- The Religious Society of Friends who allow us to use their premises as an office base and for some functions

Workshops

We held a total of forty two workshops during the year which was an increase of three on the previous year. Of these:

- 15 were in Acacia Prison
- 6 in Karnet Prison
- 8 in Bunbury Prison
- 10 in Wooroloo Prison
- 2 in the community
- 1 in Broome

Facilitator Days

We held facilitator days for community facilitators as well as two in Acacia prison and two in Wooroloo prison farm. These days are invaluable for two reasons. One is improving our skills and learning from each other. The other is to get to know one another better which is essential when working together on teams. We also had one “Bring a Friend” day which helps to introduce more people to AVP and how it works. We intend to repeat this each 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 a large following. We also boost various posts to target audiences. Thanks also to Selene for producing the newsletter. She now does this on a monthly basis which gives more regular information to our members. Our website has been a challenge this year. We felt that it was out of date and it was also occasionally giving an “unsafe” message to users. We now have a new design but are struggling to get this uploaded since none of us have the required skills.

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.

The 30th Anniversary

This was held in September at AISWA in Osborne Park. It was a happy and event attended by many past facilitators including some from the very beginning of the organisation. It helped to reinforce that the work we do is appreciated and valuable helping some change direction and live more fruitful lives.

Publication – Building Peace and Community

This book was published this year and contains accounts of AVP round the world. One chapter focuses on the first 25 years of AVP in Western Australia.

Mandalas

The Transforming Power Mandala is at the heart of AVP. It emerged from the analysis of early AVP stories of how conflict had been resolved non-violently. Over the years we here in WA have developed a couple of indigenous variations and this year, with the help of talented and artistic people, inside and outside of prison, we have been gifted several attractive wooden mandalas.

Funding

The May Trust which has supported us financially for many years, vested in 2024 and will no longer be able to provide us with an annual grant. However they did give us a generous lump sum which our treasurer has invested with Australian Ethical Investment. This will last us several years but we will need to seek alternative funding eventually

The Committee

Our committee worked together well and respectfully during the year. There was lots of enthusiasm and sharing of the workload. We have decided to use Zoom for our

meetings. Although this has disadvantages we decided that the convenience and efficiency overrode these concerns.

Our committee during the year was:

Jim Thom (Chairperson)
Sue Reid (Deputy Chairperson)
Collette Chesters (Treasurer)
Sallie Hosking (Minute Taker)
Sally Herzfeld (Member)
Sue Mulholland (Member)
Bheena Sewnarian (Member)
Selene Moonbeams (Member and Administrator)
Jacob Gunnink (Member)

I would like to thank the 2024 committee for their hard work and commitment during the year.

Our Challenges

Challenges for the coming year are:

- 1) 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. Also some of our previously active facilitators are no longer able to facilitate so the workload is falling on the shoulders of just a few active facilitators. Selene, our administrator, participated in 32 workshops. Without this level of commitment we would have had to reduce our workload considerably.
- 2) Retaining the engagement of new facilitators, both within the community and on release from prison.
- 3) Improving our marketing, finalising the website design and design of new pamphlets.

The Future

2025 marks the 50th anniversary of the Alternatives to Violence Project. Since it began in Greenhaven Prison in New York State, the organisation has done a tremendous amount of good work in many countries. Here in WA, after our first thirty years we hope to continue this work. We will focus on training more facilitators as well re-enthusing some who have been inactive due to the pressures of life but now can perhaps once again help to run workshops.

We hope to start a program to inform young people about potential pitfalls on the road to adulthood and to inspire them to choose a life free of crime. Ex-prisoners will share their stories and insights either in person or online. We are still working on the detail. We also hope to be able to run workshops for people who have suffered domestic violence.

Jim Thom
Chairperson AVPWA
14th February 2025