

***INDIGENOUS
WOMEN'S JUSTICE
FORUM REPORT***

***FAMILY VIOLENCE
FORUM (22 March 2005)***



**Victorian Aboriginal Legal
Service Co-operative Ltd.**

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Further Information

The following items are available on the VALS website at www.vals.org.au. Go to the Indigenous Women's Justice Forum (IWJF) page.

- *Program Outline;*
- *Family Violence Initiatives Booklet;*
- *Presentations;*
- *Power point presentation;*
- *Question Time;*
- *Evaluation;*
 - *Feedback Form;*
- *Aboriginal Affairs Victoria Media Release: "Ten Year Plan to Tackle Indigenous Family Violence."*

If you do not have access to the internet please contact Greta Jubb (9419 3888 or gjubb@vals.org.au) who will post you the complete version of the Family Violence Forum Report

Background - Indigenous Women's Justice Forum: Family Violence Forum (22 March 2005)

The Indigenous Women's Justice Forum (IWJF) was established with a one off-grant from the Victorian Government in 2001. The IWJF received a very positive evaluation by a State Government review. The IWJF provides an opportunity for Indigenous Australian and mainstream service providers to meet, share information and discuss key issues. The Forum also involves Indigenous Australian men in some meetings and helps highlight issues and directions which would otherwise not be identified.

Melissa Morgan resigned from the position of Indigenous Women's Justice Project Worker in July 2004. Greta Jubb (Research Officer) took on the role of organising the final IWJF. The final IWJF was held on 22 March 2005 and was a larger forum than past forums. Participants of the IWJF focused on family violence intervention and prevention initiatives and ways to move forward in addressing this issue. The IWJF on 22 March 2005 will be referred to as the Family Violence Forum (FVF) in the remainder of this Report. The FVF was largely considered a success.

There were ten presentations at the FVF presented by agencies ranging from Government to community organisations. Thank you to all who participated in the FVF. The presentations highlighted the fact that family violence is a hot topic at the moment as there are multiple initiatives in the field taking place. The FVF proved a good opportunity for those involved in the different initiatives to network and raise community awareness and participate in discussion groups.

The FVF was publicised widely to Indigenous Australian and non-Indigenous Australian men and women and over one hundred people attended, roughly forty were Indigenous Australian. Male and female Indigenous Australians and non-Indigenous Australians were invited to the FVF in recognition of the fact that family violence is a family issue.

The one-off funding grant from the Victorian Government for the IWJF has been exhausted. VALS has written submissions for funding to ensure the on-going sustainability of the IWJF. VALS is in the process of applying for further funding for the IWJF.

We apologise for the delay in producing this Report.

THANK YOU

VALS extends thanks to the following people for their involvement in the FVF:

Presenters and facilitators listed in the program outline above

IWJF Steering Committee made up of:

- Frank Guivarra (Chief Executive Officer - Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service)

- Robin Inglis (Executive Officer of Research, Planning and Development – Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service)
- Loretta O’Neill (Community Legal Education Officer – Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service)
- Greta Jubb (Research Officer – Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service)
- Alf Bamblett (Executive Officer -Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association)
- Phillip Cooper (Community Development Officer - Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Limited).
- Peter Rotumah (Executive Officer – Metropolitan Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Group).
- Liz Laguerre (Northern/Western Metropolitan Indigenous Family Violence Strategy Worker.
- Jan Muir (State Co-ordinator of Indigenous Family Violence Strategy Workers)
- Rose Solomon (Chief Executive Officer – Elizabeth Hoffman House).
- Eva Hudson (Elizabeth Hoffman House)
- Gwen McGregor (Elizabeth Hoffman House)
- Julieanne James (Senior Indigenous Policy Officer - Office of Women’s Policy).
- Claire Brown (Project Manager: Cultural Diversity Strategy Project - Family Violence - Department of Justice).

A special thanks is extended to the following people who replaced absent people: Janine Wilson, Tania Jones, Michael Bell and Alf Bamblett.

Scribes

- Jan Muir;
- Emily Chew;
- Joanna Carr;
- Emma Venables;
- Nicole Bluett-Boyd;
- Michael Bell.

Counsellor

- Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service who contributed a counsellor (Dolly Kenny free of charge).
- Counsellor from Elizabeth Hoffman House (Helen McQueen)

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

This section contains a summary of the recommendations that were developed in the Discussion Groups. The summary is based on VALS’ analysis of the recommendations. The recommendations are placed under broad headings below:

Community Education

Implement Community Education to:

- Promote rights.
- Promote life skills.
- Empower people, such as empower people to make complaints about services.
- Raise awareness of what services are available.
- Prevent people, especially young people, thinking that family violence is the norm.

Zero Tolerance

There should be a zero tolerance approach to family violence as it is not to be tolerated any longer. We should get behind the current zero tolerance framework.

Communication Strategy

Develop a Communication Strategy to prevent communication channels running parallel and only meeting up by accident.

The Communication Strategy should be between:

- People who are working in the field of family violence so they can share information about different initiatives, such as continuing the IWJF. There should be forums for all members of the family on the topic of family violence.
- Government and local organisations.
- Government and local community members.
- Mainstream services and Indigenous services. For instance, each needs to be appraised of the services the other provides and this can be accomplished through a centralized list.
- Mainstream services and the Indigenous Australian community who are clients. For instance a formal feedback process that Indigenous Australians feel comfortable using.
- Men and women.
- Members of the Indigenous Australian community, such as informal meetings. For instance, there should be more regular community events that are drug and alcohol free and whilst NAIDOC has these NAIDIC is not ongoing.
- Regional Actions Groups. Linkage between Regional Action Groups Action Plans at all levels is needed. For instance, linkages around specific issue of Healing Services.

Service Provision

General

The following services should be provided generally

- Holistic services that assist all members of the family.
- Multiple Healing Centres rather than Healing Services, as there is no need for another referral service. Healing Centres need to be given a proper trial. Healing centres.
- Counselling Services
- Services that address underlying issues, such as drug and alcohol abuse.
- Services that provide early intervention.

Men

The following services should be provided for men:

- State-wide Men's Referral Service.
- Drug and Alcohol
- Men's Healing Centre.
- Services that reduce offending and re-offending for men. Perhaps we should tap into support services such as "Flat Out", "Marg Tucker" (ie: address violence around young men) and RAJAC Action Plan.
- To deal with the effects of the Mandated Men's Behavior Change program.

Children/Youth

We should target children and youth such as:

- Focusing on shaping the beliefs and values of the next generation in order to break out of a trans-generational cycle of violence.
- Developing a Youth Specific Agency that is for Indigenous Australians.
- Devising programs around successful youth, not just 'naughty' kids.

Partnership

Develop equal partnerships and think outside the square. The partnerships can be between:

- Funded (Government) and non-funded (Community) services.
- Mainstream services and Indigenous services
- Indigenous Australians services. For instance, in metropolitan areas services cannot be built as stand-alone centres (ie: cost of land is prohibitive). There must be a joint use of centres where many services operate in the same premises together.
- Mainstream services and the Community.
- Indigenous Australians and Victoria Police.
- Men's groups (mainstream and non-Indigenous) to highlight the lack of men's programs and raise support for them.

- Indigenous Australian men and women to highlight the lack of men's programs and raise support for them.

Responsibility

Those will responsibilities meet their obligations:

Some identified responsibilities are as follows:

Indigenous Australian community

The Indigenous Australian community has the responsibility of:

- Providing support to men, women and children.
- Raising up Koori Skilled Workers.
- Ensuring Indigenous Australian workers in mainstream organisations are not isolated
- Providing guidance to children and youth.
- Getting involved in helping mainstream services and Government to serve the needs of Indigenous Australians.

Local Councils

Local Councils have the responsibility of:

- Facilitating race-relations between Indigenous community and mainstream services providers.
- Taking the lead in communities in creating change about how Indigenous people are regarded.

Mainstream Service Providers

Mainstream Service Providers have the responsibility of:

- Providing a service to the Indigenous Australian community as Indigenous Australian organisations cannot meet all the needs of the community.
- Providing appropriate services (ie: cultural sensitivity).
- Being accountable in service delivery for funding specifically for Indigenous Australians. Mainstream service providers need to be monitored in the way they provide services to the Indigenous community.
- Recognising that they have the capacity to change things at a deeper level and make services more accessible and culturally sensitive by:
 - Being creative and innovative;
 - Making visual changes to the service, such as posters;
 - Employing Koori people and employing them in 'real' jobs, not just traineeships.
 - Engaging in exchange programs with other services

- Engaging in partnerships with Indigenous Australians (ie: Memorandum of Understanding);
- Cultural awareness training;
- Recognising the need to provide a targeted service (ie: Koories specific historical and cultural issues)
- Doing something to the building to make it 'Indigenous-friendly'.
- Improving the process of identifying whether a client is of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.
- Questioning why Indigenous Australian women do not use their services and being more proactive in reaching out to the Indigenous Australian community.

Police

Police have the responsibility of

- Conducting a 12-month funded research project to inquire on how the Code of Practice can be done better for Indigenous people. The research should look into how police can make referrals effectively.
- Introducing more Police specialized in dealing with family violence, as is the case with child abuse.

Resources

The following recommendations were made in relation to resourcing issues:

- The Indigenous Australians needs to continue the fight to gain resources necessary against a backdrop where Indigenous Australians are expected to do the job with limited resources.
- If men are 98% of the problem of family violence then resource allocation should reflect this.
- Aboriginal Affairs Victoria engaged with the Indigenous Australian community about the \$900,000.00 to be made available for Healing Centres. Past dialogue was rushed. The Healing Centres needs to be re-focused towards programs that address the issue of family violence for **both** men and women. There is a need to follow up this issue since representatives of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria were no loner at the FVF when this issue was raised.
- Partnership agreements should contain the condition that culturally sensitive training of organisations takes place or the organisation does not receive targeted Indigenous Australian dollars.
- As part of the tender arrangements potential tenderers should have to prove an established relationship with the Indigenous community.
- There is a need to monitor and follow up organisations that receive and spend money allocated for Indigenous service provision.
- Philanthropic foundations can provide training on how to access money from outside Government agencies. Chris Momot from Reichstein Foundation is happy to provide more information and advice on how to write funding proposals (cmomot@reichstein.org.au).

- Funding is not necessarily required to break the cycle of abuse, but people meeting for a coffee and chat can do assist etc.

DISCUSSION GROUPS

Men's Discussion Group

Men's Services

Facilitated by Michael Bell (Executive Officer RAJAC Barwon South Region)

Service Availability

Identification of type of programs that are being conducted for men as follows:

- Men's Shed Programs are established in communities.
- Men's Referrals Services.
- Some men's services are not focused on family violence.
- Some thirty two mainstream programs are being conducted.
- In Newcastle there is a men's and a boy's program.
- The Family Violence Court will be a good program to help address issues.

Service Gaps

Resourcing: Funding

- Across the State there are small programs for men, but there is a lack of resources, meaning there is not enough Family Violence Programs. Programs/services that support men are hampered by a lack of resources as there is no money for men's groups. Monetary support often comes from community sources (eg: Men's Shed receives monetary support from a local health service).
- If men are 90% of the problem then more resources are needed to address men's issues. The \$900,000.00 provided by Aboriginal Affairs Victoria needs to be re-focused towards programs that address the issue of family violence for both men and women. There was the issue of only being given a week to develop a proposal for a family violence program using the money.
- Mainstream services are further ahead in the provision of family violence services than Indigenous services who are under resourced and limited by such under-resourcing.
- Resourcing Staff: lack of Koori Skilled Workers.
- Where resourcing is being directed to: drug issues are not being addressed.
- Cultural appropriateness of services provided: Indigenous Australian men are referred to counseling, but mainstream counseling is only available and culturally inappropriate.

Identified needs:

- Break cycle: programs that break the chain of family violence.
- Address underlying factors: focus on drug and alcohol issues, not family violence issues. We need to ask the question of why men are in the present situation and

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see it as the effect of inter-generational post-trauma and try to support men going through this.

- Intergenerational link: young people see family violence in front of them and are influenced by what they see. Men do not teach young people. Violence is a result of the situation men find themselves in, such as lack of employment and education. If a man is not employed when they come home they attack the one closest to them and the one they love. The inter-generational nature of post-trauma involves the past coming down through the ranks. Many people see violence in their families, the violence is later perpetuated, and this behavior is seen as common.
- Reporting strategies: establishment of reporting of offences strategies.
- Forums: men attend forums to discuss family violence issues. There should be more than one men's forum and there should be forums for families on the topic of family violence.
- Support men: we need to support men who are going through difficulties and take it out on the people closest to them. The question is how do you try and get men to seek assistance?
- Early intervention: we need to address issues early.
- Healing: healing programs and counselling programs are required.
- Communication: We need to highlight the issues to Government. Communication is an issue also in relation to how do you get people to disclose personal issues? There is an issue around confidentiality and location where the topic of family violence is discussed.
- Education: more education on family violence through schools and in the local community is required (eg: conduct culture camps instead of talking about abuse issues). There is a lack of knowledge of programs being conducted.
- Guidance on how to handle the situation when Dad leaves the home and also family reunification is required.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Presented by Reg Blow (Men's Shed)

- Address underlying causes: we can attempt to try to fix the problem of family violence by going to the root cause, such as addressing issues of drug and alcohol abuse. There is a need to look at trying to support men to overcome problems of drug and alcohol abuse.
- Partnerships: is used as a solution in other areas (ie: Koori Court) and should be applied to the situation of family violence. For instance, Indigenous Australians and Indigenous Australian organisations should develop partnerships with mainstream men's groups.
- Vocalisation: Indigenous Australian men need to have a say.
- Cultural Awareness Training: service providers, such as counselors to which perpetrators of family violence are mandated to, should undergo culturally sensitive training in order to meet the needs of Indigenous Australians.
- Funding/Consultation: The \$900,000.00 set aside for healing services can be refocused towards programs addressing family violence for both men and women.

There was only a week given to develop this proposal and consultation was pretty limited and more preparation is needed so as to determine how the \$900,000.00 is spent.

- Zero tolerance policy: there should be a zero tolerance approach to family violence as it is not to be tolerated any longer. In many workplaces there is zero tolerance to racism and this should be the same for family violence. A strong stance is needed on the issue of family violence. We should get behind the current zero tolerance framework.
- Where to begin: In order to identify cause we must go right back to the beginning.
- Counselling: - Programs actually need to be implemented.

Women's Discussion Group 1

Mainstream Services and Indigenous Australian Services

Facilitated by Linda Bamblett (Chairperson Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee)

Police

- Code of Conduct: the Police Code of Conduct (Code) is not nearly specific enough. There is a suggestion of cultural sensitivity in the Code but there is no explanation of what this involves. Whether you are arrested depends on whether a conviction is likely. The Police presentation was not convincing about whether the Code will be applied appropriately for Indigenous people. The Code does not specifically say what needs to be done in an Indigenous family violence situation. Indigenous people themselves have done thirty years of work on this.
- Referral: Non-Indigenous Police are quite ignorant and their capacity to refer clients is limited. If on the first occasion someone gets a poor response from authorities it will be ten years before that individual approaches family services again. Response times for Koorie calls to Police are slower than for non-Indigenous Australian people.
- If Police were confident that the appropriate services would be available then they would respond better. In the end, the Police will be referring people to services and the services will not be meeting the need themselves. Services are not available for Police to make referrals effectively. It is a concern that Victoria Police have put a Code in place without having done research to ensure the services are available at a local level to facilitate referrals. Victoria Police have not been effective and do not understand about using existing services. How can we remedy a lack of confidence in the sector that there is someone appropriate who can take referrals?
- Relationship: Indigenous Australian's use of the Police varies between extremes in communities. Some people go to the Police all the time, whereas some have a (culturally-influenced) belief that they should not go to Police.
- Partnership: there should be the ability to form a legitimate public partnership between the Indigenous community and the Police.

Local Councils

- Local Council Responsibility: Local Councils see family violence as an important issue to address. Moreland Council has had programs in place for a long time. The Council should be able to facilitate inter-racial relationships. Local Governments should be able to facilitate race-relations between Indigenous community and mainstream services providers.
- Local Government has a responsibility to take the lead in communities in creating change about how Indigenous people are regarded.
- Partnership: in metropolitan areas services cannot be built as stand-alone centres (ie: cost of land is prohibitive). There must be a joint use of centres where many services operate in the same premises together.
- Indigenous Australian responsibility: Local Governments have all the policies in place, but there must also be a push from Aboriginal communities to get involved in order to actively access the services themselves.
- Employment: There is a need for Government to employ Indigenous people in 'real' jobs, not just traineeships.
- Accessibility: How best can Local councils make services more accessible to the Koori community (ie: posters, culturally awareness training, collaboration on developing programs or memorandums of understanding)?

Mainstream services

- Leadership: should mainstream services take the lead in making mainstream services more accessible or should the Koorie community? Counselling should occur within the community and race relationships should be formed between the community and mainstream services. Who is taking the lead in making counseling more accessible?
- Partnership: how best do we create links and partnerships between mainstream and Indigenous organisations? Is it the Koori or mainstream community's prerogative to take leadership on making services effective? What is difference between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous approach to family violence?
- Self determination: is there a risk of losing self-determination/management where people go to a mainstream service?
- Place for mainstream services: Indigenous Australian organisations cannot meet the demands placed on them as they have case loads of hundreds. The need far outweighs and exceeds expectation or ability. Therefore, there is a need to develop partnerships with mainstream organisations. Koori organizations are not big enough to service the entire community. Koori services are specialised but they cannot meet all the needs of the community. Mainstream services must be made use of.
- Some Indigenous women might prefer to use mainstream services so as to maintain their or their family's privacy.

- Targeted approach: Indigenous people are dealing with different historical ills (ie: trauma/grief/loss) that has not be dealt with by Indigenous people. There is insufficient research/programs to develop what might constitute ‘best practice’ in relation to this issue.
- VALS survey of service providers showed that the service providers do not see anger management as an ‘Indigenous issue’, they see it as a ‘male issue’. How can service providers be made to see their work as having particular cultural issues/implications?
- Indigenous people are told ‘you have your own services’ and so will not be assisted by mainstream organisations. Mainstream organisations need to be aware that they should serve Indigenous Australian people as well.
- Isolation: Indigenous workers in mainstream organisations are isolated and find it difficult to make contact with local Indigenous community. For example, at Inner South Community Health Service the Indigenous Liaison Officer is finding it hard to link in with local Indigenous organisations.

Capacity of Mainstream service providers to be culturally sensitive

- Accessibility: are services being made more accessible? “A Koori face at the counter is not enough”.
- Question: Women’s Information (WIRE) faces pressure to provide services to the Indigenous community. But how can WIRE do this in a way that is meaningful to Indigenous people? It is unrealistic to achieve this as we look like a dominant white service. How can WIRE be culturally sensitive without being tokenistic?
- Answer: The look can be changed. Visual changes at services (ie: posters/pamphlets/information about other services in the area) can be displayed. This shows some level of acceptance or inclusivity.
- Responsibility: If an organisation has the ability to provide the services then you must ensure that it is done in an appropriate way.
- A ‘Glass ceiling’ still exists in every mainstream organisation. Mainstream organisations must look for the glass ceilings inside their organisations. Until it is gone Indigenous people will not have a voice or power.
- Capacity: services have the ability to change things at a deeper level (capacity to be culturally sensitive) as they do have the ability to effect change. For instance, there could be a training program for workers or do something to the building to make it ‘Indigenous-friendly’.
- Mainstream services can improve on their process of identifying whether a client is of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent. Sometimes Indigenous people want to be identified, at other times they do not.
- Creativity: mainstream services need to be creative, such as establish an exchange program, scholarships, cadetships (eg: VALS and local health centre relationship exchange).
- In developing partnerships between the Indigenous Australian community, organisations and mainstream services providers people need to think outside the square and initiate innovative programs (eg: exchange programs).

Communication

- Improve communication: there needs to be improved communication between mainstream and Indigenous services. Mainstream organisations must get to know their local communities. This will not always demand extensive funded research (ie: existing resources). We need to work out how to work together and engage and who and where the engagement points are. Indigenous and mainstream services need to be appraised of what services are available.
- Information sharing: mainstream services need to get information out to Indigenous people to raise awareness of what services are available. Indigenous people would use them if they knew about them! (eg: a centralised list).
- There is a misinformed belief that there are services available after hours. There needs to be accurate dissemination of information about services.
- Strategy: communication channels are running parallel and it is only rarely when we trip over a need do we re-evaluate our procedures.
- Exposure: mainstream services do not have access to Indigenous people and so they do not have the exposure and experience to help ‘cultural sensitivity’.
- Is it the responsibility on mainstream organisations, or on Indigenous people to ‘expose’ mainstream organisations to Indigenous Australians? ‘Exposure’ is not necessary, it’s just about sitting down and talking to people.
- Feedback: Indigenous people tend not to make complaints about a service as they have no faith that their complaints will be taken seriously. Rather than complain it is easier just to move to another service. A result of this is that Councils and mainstream services do not get information on how to make their services better.
- Indigenous Australians should be encouraged not just to accept things, but to submit complaints. This is important considering that mainstream organisations have little ‘exposure’ to Indigenous people.
- When an Indigenous person complains to an organisation (eg: Centrelink) they are actually complaining about the entirety of the system, legislation and Government. It becomes difficult for a particular worker to deal with the whole 170 years of complaints in one interaction.

Indigenous Australian services

How can RAJACS get their services more ‘on the ground’?

Criminal vs alternative/restorative approaches:

The morning session did not really discuss criminal vs. alternative/restorative approaches to justice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Presented by Linda Bamblett (Chairperson Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee)

- Koories specific: historical (trauma, grief and loss) issues must be recognized and dealt with by mainstream services. Koori specific programs for Koori men need to be different to mainstream programs. They need to be different as the Koori community has to deal with trauma and grief issues which are historically based. Koorie and non-Koorie men are different because Koorie men have cultural trauma as well.
- Development of Partnerships: between mainstream and Indigenous services must be solidified. In developing partnerships people need to think outside the square, such as look at programs for employees (ie: take Koori workers into mainstream services, and vice-versa). Mainstream and Koorie services do not have to be in competition. We need to think about how partnerships between mainstream and Koorie services could work better.
- Innovative Thinking: needs to occur, such as exchange program for employees in Indigenous and mainstream services.
- How mainstream services can make their services more accessible:
 - Posters;
 - Koori employees;
 - Partnerships;
 - Memorandum of Understanding;
 - Cultural awareness training;
 - Exchange programs between services.
- Information provision: There needs to be accurate dissemination of what services are available, both by mainstream service providers and Indigenous Australian service providers.
- Empowerment: Gaps within mainstream services must be identified. There is a need to encourage Indigenous Australians to complain and be aware of gaps in service delivery. If the Koori community is not accessing services, they will very rarely complain.
- Research into the Code: there should be a 12-month funded research project to inquire on how the Code of Practice can be done better for Indigenous people.

Women's Discussion Group 2

Rural Issues

Facilitated by Janine Wilson (Northern Loddon Mallee Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Group)

Issues:

Accessibility of mainstream services:

- There is a lack of cultural sensitivity by mainstream providers. It should be Indigenous Australians' choice which service they choose to utilise, either Indigenous Australian or mainstream. Indigenous Australians will not necessarily utilize services in their own community (shame etc). This is especially pertinent to rural areas where communities tend to be isolated and every action is viewed by others in the community. Mainstream services are not accessed by the Indigenous community as they do not meet their needs.

- The appropriateness of counseling of Indigenous Australians is questionable. Mainstream counseling is not culturally sensitive. There needs to be personal development in our way of life.
- There are language barriers and no advocacy roles, which results in lack of knowledge about services which are available.
- Motel owners (despite being paid for accepting victims of domestic violence) are often racist and will not let women use the soap, shampoo and will not give them breakfast, etc. Motels need to be more accountable for the way they treat indigenous women.
- Whilst it is easier to access mainstream services, it is easier to become lost in the mainstream system. Indigenous Australian women are not accessing mainstream family violence services. If Indigenous Australians go to mainstream services they should not be turned away and told to go to Indigenous Australian services. If mainstream services are getting dollars for servicing Indigenous Australians this money should be removed from them if they discriminate when they look at the colour of the skin of the client. Mainstream services should not get black dollars.
- Accountability for funding: Mainstream services need to be far more accountable concerning the use of funding specifically for Indigenous Australians and accountability in their service delivery. Mainstream service providers need to be monitored in the way they provide services to the Indigenous community.
- Indigenous Australian services: are not interested in providing family violence services. Indigenous rural women sometimes prefer to use mainstream services as it makes it more difficult for the men to find them in temporary shelters. Therefore it is important to have more Indigenous Australian shelters and services so people do not know where they are.
- Government approach: the Government is spending thousands on research, policy and plans but it is not doing anything as it is detached from the experiences of real people.
- Type of service: the lack of shelters in rural areas means that whereabouts of women is easily identified by perpetrators. There is a vacant house in Footscray – been empty for six years, owned by DHS.
- There is no follow up or support.
- A band aid approach is taken and this needs to be stopped.
- Healing centre/services was poorly organised. We need healing centres with appropriate services. We do not need more referral services but a Healing Centre that is holistic (ie: one centre with one address) that deals with many problems in the same place. There is no point in solving part of the problem in one place, and another in another place. There is not enough services out there for Indigenous Australian men, as they are the forgotten link and there should be Men's Healing Centres, not services too.
- The emphasis on 'services' do not accurately reflect the community's wishes. Healing 'centres' are very important and should not be changed to 'services'. Lack of consultation is a bit problem with the location and set up of healing centres.
- Men need a men's referral centre.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Presented by Janine Wilson (Northern Loddon Mallee Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Group)

- Context: needs to be considered when developing strategies, such as differences between the rural (isolated) environment and the metropolitan environment.
- Communication between local organizations and Government is required.
- Healing Centre: we need multiple Healing Centres, rather than Healing Services.
- Equal Partnerships needs to be established between funded (Government) and non-funded (Community) services.
- Accountability: Partnership agreements should contain the condition that culturally sensitive training or organisations takes place or the organisation does not receive targeted Indigenous Australian dollars. Even though there is a partnership agreement between Domestic Violence Victoria and the Indigenous Australian community it needs monitoring, as they are not always practicing policies. There is a need to follow up organisations that receive and spend money allocated for Indigenous service provision.
- Philanthropic Foundations as an alternative source of funding: we should be fighting Government and accessing money from foundations and trusts. Philanthropic foundations can provide training on how to access money from outside Government agencies. The Government dictates how to spend Government provided dollars. But if Indigenous groups get together with philanthropic agencies they can access more money to change the Government's funding frameworks. Funding from philanthropic organisations is an option for Indigenous groups so they don't have to rely on government funding all the time. Chris Momot from Reichstein Foundation is happy to provide more information and advice on how to write funding proposals (cmomot@reichstein.org.au).
- Specialised workers: There should also be more Police specialized in dealing with family violence, as is the case with child abuse. Domestic violence workers should have an advocacy role as well as service provision. There should be more Indigenous Australian social workers.

Women's Discussion Group 3

Metropolitan Issues

Facilitated by Rose Solomon (Executive Officer Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-operative Limited)

Issues Identified

- Ex-prisoners: lack of support is caused by inability to track perpetrators as they exit prison to follow them up, which may be a preventative measure to address the issue of recidivism. There is a lack of support and tracking women as they exit prison and correctional centres.
- Rural women: there is no place for women to come together and talk. Rural women who come to Melbourne feel isolated. We need a non-formal forum for Indigenous Australian women.

- Acceptance of unacceptable: young women are accepting family violence as the norm, which is due to lack of education and awareness. This is problematic for many reasons, including the generational issue (women as role models). The image of young women needs to be examined, including the current acceptance of violence as part of the norm. Children witness violence and think it's ok and no one is saying that it is not ok. We need to address the effects on children witnessing violence and growing up to think it is okay.
- Housing Issues: the process of finding housing for women fleeing family violence is very difficult. There are problematic conditions attached to tenancies by the Office of Housing. For instance, conditions surrounding couples reuniting. The Housing Tribunal said to one woman that if she continued with her claim it would tell the Department that her partner had been living there illegally.
- Mandated Behavioral change program: there is a perception that services are available for men subject to the mandated program when they are not. There is a gap in services that reduce offending and re-offending for men. Perhaps we should tap into support services such as "Flat Out", "Marg Tucker" (ie: address violence around young men) and RAJAC Action Plan. There is a lack of resources on the ground to deal with those effects of Mandated Men's Behavior Change program. The tender for counselling services was won by Relationships Australia even though they have no contact with the Indigenous community.
- Drug and Alcohol: there is a lack of services available to support the specific issues of the impact of drug and alcohol abuse on family violence.
- Holistic: services should assist all members of the family.
- Regional Action Groups: linkage between Regional Action Groups Action Plans at all levels is needed. For instance, linkages around specific issue of Healing Services.
- Mainstream services: are not sensitive to Indigenous Australian's needs. They do not question why Indigenous Australian women do not use their services. They need to be more proactive in reaching out to the Indigenous Australian community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Presented by Rose Solomon (Executive Officer Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-operative Limited)

- Youth Specific Agency: There are no youth specific organizations for Indigenous Australians where youth feel comfortable and young people need their own space. A youth specific organisation should be established in light of the fact of the intergenerational effect of family violence and education is a vital part of prevention. Some programs should be targeted at successful youth, as often programs are devised around 'naughty' kids.
- Community Based Prevention – Healing Centre: Healing centres should be developed for people with mental health issues (ie: as an alternative to medical treatment or need to access mainstream health services/hospitals. People do not necessarily need medication, but instead they need a healing place.
- Self Determination: Less formal women's groups need to be mobilised.

- Empowerment of women: is required, and in particular young women. Such empowerment does not require funding as it can occur through women's groups being organised etc.
- Focus on Funding: the focus of funding is 'holding back' the process and holding back Indigenous Australians as a people. Indigenous Australians survived before dollars came along, so why cannot they continue to survive? Funding is not necessarily required to break the cycle of abuse, but people meeting for a coffee and chat can do assist etc.
- Events: there should be more regular community events that are drug and alcohol free and whilst NAIDOC has these NAIDIC is not ongoing.
- Education: is a very important component as it is related to prevention. However, the Government is shying away from community education which is directly related to an escalation in violence. Indigenous Australians require education, including general life skills (ie: how to live, pay bills and take on responsibility).
- Joint Government initiatives: increased joint Government initiatives are required.
- Tenderers prove partnership with Indigenous Service providers: tenders must prove an established partnership with Indigenous Australian service providers before they are awarded a tender. It was suggested that part of the tender arrangements should be that the agencies have to prove an established relationship with the Indigenous community.

Further Information

The Evaluation of the FVF, which includes a description of how the objectives of the FVF were met, is available on the VALS website. The comments provided by participants of the FVF who completed the Feedback Form are also available on the website. The feedback provided was positive.

The following parts of the FVF Report are also available on the website:

- Presentations;
- Power point presentations;
- Question Time;
- Family Violence Initiatives Booklet;
- Program Outline;
- Aboriginal Affairs Victoria Media Release: "Ten Year Plan to Tackle Indigenous Family Violence".

GO TO THE VALS WEBSITE FOR THE COMPLETE FAMILY VIOLENCE FORUM REPORT:

WWW.VALS.ORG.AU

If you do not have access to the internet please contact Greta Jubb (9419 3888 or gjubb@vals.org.au) who will post you the complete version of the Family Violence Forum Report.