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Issues,
Lessons &
Hot Tips

This section explores some of the issues and lessons arising from the Victorian Family Violence Prevention Networkers. It also highlights some of the lessons and hot tips arising from campaigns and evaluations undertaken in other Australian states, nationally and internationally.

These issues and lessons are meant to act as a guide, a checklist, and a source of further ideas. Use the information below to make good projects better, not to stop ambitious, innovative or 'smell of an oily rag' projects from seeing the light of day.

issues

ISSUES ARISING FROM THE NETWORKERS

Many past, and all current Victorian Family Violence Prevention Networkers were interviewed in the preparation of this kit. Their perspectives on pressing issues and lessons include the following.

*** TIME AND RESOURCES ARE LACKING**

Repeatedly, workers have stressed time commitments as an issue they struggle with, and one that often hampers the effectiveness of projects. Networkers positions have only recently been funded full-time (in 2002 for a period of three years). Prior to that, Networker positions in some regions were only ten hours per week.

Limited funding means that projects are often not further developed, and that the potential of many initiatives is not realised. It also means that Networkers do not have access to paid support, and many projects rely solely on students and volunteer support for their implementation. As one Networker put it:

These projects are so time consuming, and they are often one-offs, dying as soon as they finish. They need to be ongoing in some way, and they need ongoing resources.²¹²

Networkers were very positive about the increased funding for their positions, and look forward to a permanent commitment to funding full-time Networkers in each region. Multi-year funding is an ideal model for family violence prevention projects.

Changing community norms takes time and considerable investment. The projects discussed in this kit repeatedly point to the advantages of project development over a long period of time, building inclusive and consultative partnerships with the community for change.

*** LACK OF RESOURCES MEANS VALUABLE APPROACHES AREN'T BEING SHARED**

A lack of resources is also preventing very successful, well developed programs from extending to other parts of Victoria. Projects such as Victoria's Respect Protect Connect and Solving the Jigsaw are effective, well established programs which could, with adequate resources, be further developed and extended to other parts of Victoria and Australia. This lack of resources is also contributing to a duplication of efforts. For example, Networkers responding to an urgent local need for schools-based program by initiating projects despite inadequate resources, can face many of the same difficulties and 'teething problems' programs such as Respect Protect Connect have already resolved. Whilst local applicability is vital, Network resources may be better used if well established projects were better resourced and able to be locally adapted for a broader application.

*** COLLABORATION AND COOPERATION IS ESSENTIAL TO SUCCESS**

Networkers' projects demonstrate the importance of extensive and diverse collaboration and cooperation. Cooperation between workers in family violence services and generalist services has been particularly important. The success of many projects can be traced back to the consultations with stakeholders including family violence survivors; a diverse reference group; and the involvement of a number of government and non-government agencies. This can include local councils; businesses; police; family violence services; health and welfare services; schools and tertiary institutions; and community organisations such as the Country Women's Association and sporting clubs.

*** PARTICIPATION AND OWNERSHIP MUST BE FOSTERED**

Building on the above, a project with a large number of partners is likely to have a bigger community impact. Projects that use an empowerment or community development model, that foster participation and ownership of project ideas and activities, are more likely to have flow on effects for both the project and its participants.

*** STATE-WIDE RESOURCES AND CAMPAIGN FOCUS ARE EFFECTIVE AND COST EFFICIENT**

State-wide campaigns such as the Victorian Family and Friends Campaign provide a clear focus and resources for local action. Well produced materials and resources, created in consultation with regional workers, can be used in any locality and adapted to each area. This is an effective use of available funds and an efficient way to deliver coordinated professional development such as media training. It also allows a consistent and broad distribution of key messages, and a momentum around the issue throughout the state that workers can use to their advantage on a local level.

Workers have also talked about the 'energy' and 'buzz' created by campaigns such as Family and Friends. One worker described the enthusiasm created by the campaign as 'thrilling'. The Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre has an important role to play as a central facilitator and a focus for networking and the exchange of ideas and resources in Victoria.

*** PROJECT MANAGEMENT SKILLS ARE VITAL AND MORE ARE NEEDED**

Project management skills encompassing feasibility, design, implementation and evaluation are vital to maximise project effectiveness and the possibility of further development and refining of initiatives.

*** EVALUATION IS LACKING**

Too many community-based projects are not evaluated, and, if they are, it is often not a comprehensive, long-term or formal evaluation. This is a major obstacle in the development of effective family

violence prevention. Family violence prevention initiatives are relatively new, and there is a range of conflicting philosophies underpinning projects, and divergent opinions about what works. Without rigorous evaluation these assumptions and methodologies cannot be tested or developed. The state-wide Victorian Family and Friends Campaign was not formally evaluated due to a lack of resources, and although the campaign was both innovative and broad reaching, a lack of evaluation hampers attempts to assess its impact. One Networker commented: *'How do you know what works? How do you know the impact, how do you keep it going, and do you have the energy?'*²¹³

*** RESEARCH CREATES A POWERFUL MANDATE**

Local research has emerged as an important area of work, with a number of Family Violence Prevention Networks undertaking primary research projects. Local research has provided a 'snapshot' of what is happening, and is a powerful mandate for action, particularly in rural communities, where women may be very isolated and family violence may be broadly denied as 'not happening here'.

*** LOCAL RELEVANCE IS ESSENTIAL FOR CHANGING COMMUNITY NORMS**

Local responses must be responsive to the particular needs and character of the area. Local networks, connections and knowledge are vital to effective project planning and implementation.

*** REINVENTING THE WHEEL OCCURS**

Whilst there is a lot of networking and sharing of information, a lack of resources, and perhaps a lack of access to information about other community-based projects has led to a duplication of efforts. Lessons learnt from other similar projects are a very firm basis for good project development, and part of the reason for producing this kit. State-wide approaches and resources are also seen as a good way to avoid a duplication of efforts.

*** WORKING WITH SURVIVORS IS INVALUABLE AND REQUIRES PARTICULAR STRATEGIES**

Survivors can play an invaluable role as community educators, advocates, role models and a source of knowledge and expertise on family violence. It is important to work with women 'where they are at' recognising the trauma, fear and uncertainty that may still be a part of their everyday life: *'For women in refuges, they might not even know what they are doing tomorrow'*.²¹⁴

Projects have repeatedly shown the need to have the voices and experiences of survivors of family violence at the core of prevention work. As one Networker noted:

*The power of having survivors speak, to give women the chance to speak and to hear it from a survivor ... it has an incredible impact on people, so much more powerful than anything I could say.*²¹⁵

Clear understandings around anonymity, safety and legal issues associated with naming participants and perpetrators are very important. Projects such as the Victorian Victorious Quilt Connection have highlighted the value of caring for participants by providing childcare, catering, flexible access and an inclusive approach to women and children's involvement.

*** LINKS WITH INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES AND ORGANISATIONS REQUIRE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT**

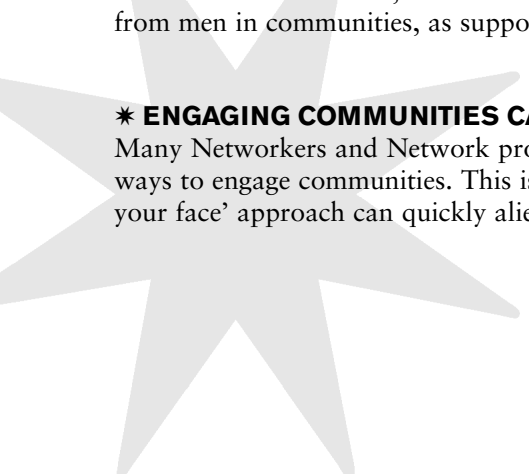
Links with Indigenous family violence workers, communities and services vary from FVPN to FVPN, and require considerable further development. With the establishment of the Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Task Force in 2001, there are new opportunities for collaboration and cooperation. The Task Force released its Final Report in December 2003,²¹⁶ and Indigenous Family Violence Support Officers have now been engaged in nine regions in Victoria. Indigenous Family Violence Support Officers contact details are available from the DVIRC website: www.dvirc.org.au

*** MEN SHOULD BE ACTIVELY ENGAGED**

General community awareness-raising projects such as Week Without Violence, Coasters for Pubs, marches to end violence, fun runs and many other events, have the potential for more involvement from men in communities, as supporters, spokespeople and role models.

*** ENGAGING COMMUNITIES CAN REQUIRE A 'POSITIVE, SUBTLE' APPROACH**

Many Networkers and Network projects use a positive and subtle approach, finding innovative ways to engage communities. This is particularly relevant to rural areas where a hard line and 'in your face' approach can quickly alienate communities.



Lessons & Hot Tips For:

PROJECT DESIGN & PLANNING

Some Questions to Ask Yourself

- > **Why are you doing the project?**
- > **Be clear about objectives: what are you trying to change?**
- > **Who wants the project?**
- > **Who will work on the project?**
- > **Is the project addressing the rights and needs of the intended target group?
How have needs been assessed?**
- > **What are the principles, policies and procedures that will be used to
guide this project?**
- > **Has the intended target group been consulted?**
- > **Can you secure adequate resources for the project?**
- > **How long will the project take?**

Hot Tips – Planning & Design

- Plan and consult: why, who, where and how.
- Carry out a feasibility study if you can.
- Design your project carefully and include an evaluation – how will you know the project made a difference?
- Document your assumptions, so you can go back and test these when evaluating.
- Use current research and statistics to support your work; work from an evidence-based approach, both qualitative and quantitative.
- Projects should always be designed to start with current community capacity, i.e. start where people 'are at'.
- Build in accountability to survivors. Consult with, and seek advice, input, and involvement from women and children where safe and appropriate.
- Identify government policy which supports your approach. Engage government and remind them of their accountability, praise government efforts, critique shortcomings, lobby for changes.
- Estimate the implementation time of the project, then double it. This will then allow enough time for planning and some evaluation. For example if a project is going to take 12 months to implement, give it a two year time period. This is to allow three months for planning, two months for project establishment, an extra two months for project implementation, 12 months for project activities, two months to wrap the project up and three months for evaluation.
- Build in flexibility, for example contingency plans for budgets, timelines and personnel.
- Build training and capacity-building into the project, learn as you go.

hot tips

Action Research

If your approach is innovative or new to your area, action research may be the best approach to take:

The linking of the terms “action” and “research” highlights the essential features of this method: trying out ideas in practice as a means of increasing knowledge about and/or improving curriculum, teaching, and learning.²¹⁷

A Clear and Well Articulated Philosophy

- Have a clearly stated philosophy on family violence and prevention. See the Family Violence Prevention Principles on p. 19; these are a common set of principles which the Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre and the Victorian Family Violence Prevention Networks work to.
- Programs should acknowledge that violence against women and children is a breach of international, national, and state law, and violates fundamental human rights.
- Use a philosophical framework which includes a feminist analysis of power; gender; women and children’s rights; child abuse; diversity; and legal issues. This includes promoting programs that challenge constructions of masculinity which condone male violence.²¹⁸
- Key messages must acknowledge that women and children are not responsible for men’s use of violence.
- Document and make agreements about philosophy, messages, responsibilities and decision-making authority before the project starts.
- Embrace a ‘bottom up’ philosophy so that strategies are informed by work at a local and regional level.

Project Evaluation

- Monitor and document as you go, don’t wait till the end. Evaluate at stages during the project, and use this to further develop the project. Evaluation should be used by the organisation to learn from the project, and incorporate these learnings in future projects. Share your evaluation with others: successes and failures are both important.
- Evaluate short and long term; try to measure changes in awareness and attitudes and, if at all possible, behaviour.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

hot tips

Resources

- Get adequate funding, including funding for evaluation.
- Piggy back on other efforts and don’t re-invent the wheel.
- Family violence campaigns should be conducted in collaboration with the service system to ensure follow up and support for those people who go on to access services. This will also require an adequate level of funding to allow services to respond to the increased demand for services, which will come with any successful campaign.

Working with Other Agencies and Community Groups

- Identify key agencies that will pitch in, help out and cooperate.
- Enlist support and collaboration from a wide range of organisations such as schools, hospitals, child protection staff, police, community health centres, neighbourhood centres, domestic violence services, community legal centres, youth centres, sports clubs, and shopping centres.
- Link in with existing programs, especially those that provide accessible and credible services.
- Campaigns should be conducted in collaboration with the service system to ensure follow up for those people who go on to access services.

Be Accountable to Target Groups

- Be accountable to your target group. Involve them in an advisory group or reference group if appropriate.
- Ensure that the safety of women and children is a priority. Will there be a backlash? Consider this before the program commences. Consider how your program may unintentionally harm women and children. For example, are resources in place to respond to increased demand for services?

Campaign messages

- Explore Social Marketing, a critical element in effective mass media campaigns.
- Find out how to engage your audience.
- Consistent messages are essential across a campaign.
- Supply style guides for the implementation and presentation of campaigns to all involved organisations and agencies, to ensure uniform presentation of the campaign.
- State-wide coordination support and provision of materials provides a consistent message and effective use of resources.
- Public transport has been shown to be very effective in getting messages out.
- Be clear about where your target group will be. For example, women may be in supermarkets without their partners, is there information there?

Copyright

If your project uses stories, images and materials created by other groups or individuals, you will need to clarify issues of copyright and ownership. This should be sorted out early in project planning to allow for adequate consultation time and to ensure ongoing access to materials created during a project. See Web Resources (p. 109) for more information.

Getting the Message Out

- Using the media is vital. It requires training and support of spokespeople and workers, and well-constructed accessible materials for journalists.
- Develop clear media messages; identify your target group and the desired changes.
- Prepare a media kit and media briefing resources, such as survivors' stories and statistics.
- Make sure the media messages and campaign do not have unintended negative consequences for children or other victims of family violence. This may involve testing your message before it goes out.

- Develop strategies to encourage responsible media reporting of family violence. Build partnerships with media to ensure they have access to up to date, succinct information for their use.
- Put a 'face' to the issue if possible. Is there a survivor who can tell her story safely? If not, she may be able to tell her story anonymously, either directly to trusted media outlets, or through a written story distributed by your organisation to media.

Lobbying and Advocacy

- Advocacy and lobbying is a key element to family violence prevention.
- Support peak bodies and encourage them to take up family violence as an issue.
- Link into international and global efforts to reduce violence against women and children.
- Access 'how to' resources that will help you run an effective advocacy campaign (see Web Resources p. 105).

State-wide & Local

State-wide campaigns with local implementation are a very effective use of resources and allow consistent messages and state-wide impact, alongside local ownership and strategies.

Lessons & Tips for Working With:

WOMEN

- The voices, knowledge and expertise of survivors are an important part of family violence prevention work, in research, community education and advocacy.
- Understand women's reality, why women stay, how they manage to leave.
- Support community awareness work that increases women's empowerment through informing and empowering friends, family and neighbours to assist.
- Programs must challenge gender stereotypes.
- Increase support for women survivors, both short and long term.
- Programs must work towards women's and girls' equality.
- Empowerment programs for girls can include self-defence, legal rights, leadership programs and sport.
- Gender specialist agencies have a vital role to play in family violence reduction.
- Workplace family violence prevention strategies are an important area of focus.
- Work within a framework that acknowledges power, gender, women's and children's rights, child abuse, and legal issues in relation to family violence.

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Lessons and tips for working with Indigenous communities include contributions by Janice Muir, State-wide Coordinator, Indigenous Family Violence Strategy, and some of the recently appointed Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Support Officers.

- Initiatives to address family violence in Indigenous Communities must be led by Indigenous people.
- Increase understanding of Indigenous family violence issues through linking with Indigenous workers and training.
- Acknowledge impacts of colonialism on spiritual, economic and cultural wellbeing.
- Utilise existing strategies and understandings outlined by the Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Task Force in their reports and in the Indigenous Family Violence Strategy.
- Contact your local Indigenous Family Violence Support Officers and Regional Actions Groups and liaise on strategy and a community led response.²¹⁹
- Contact should be made with Indigenous communities at the outset of projects, don't tack it on as an afterthought.²²⁰
- Develop effective partnerships with Indigenous organisations and communities.²²¹
- Involve Indigenous communities in policy, planning and program development, and in service delivery.²²²

- When making links with Indigenous communities respect and be aware of local community protocols. Try to ensure you talk to key Indigenous people and ensure that they understand what the project is about. Make an appointment to discuss the project face-to-face, don't just use the phone.²²³
- Part of the empowerment process is ensuring there is an equal partnership to ensure informative discussions and solutions.²²⁴
- Encourage and resource capacity building such as training and skilling of workers.

Be aware of the **Key Values and Principles of the Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Task Force**. These are:

- Safety and security for victims of violence.
- Strong community leadership and positive role models.
- Shared responsibility and being supportive of each other.
- Healthy lifestyles based on harmonious relationships and respect for self and others.
- Cultural integrity/respect and cultural safety within Indigenous and mainstream services.
- No more violence – in the home, in the family, in the community or in the workplace.²²⁵

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

- Programs with disadvantaged communities are essential. These communities have been identified as 'at risk', with young people in disadvantaged communities experiencing higher levels of family violence and higher levels of intergenerational transmission of violence.
- Programs should use and acknowledge gender issues and issues of power and control to raise awareness about family violence. This includes promoting programs that challenge constructions of masculinity that condone male violence.
- Universal approaches, which include all children rather than focusing on 'at risk' children, can avoid stigmatising children. Programs targeting 'at risk' children must take care not to stigmatise them.
- Programs targeting primary school children are critical for intervening before aggressive and violent behaviour is entrenched.
- Key messages in programs should highlight children's and young people's legal rights to live safely and free from fear and threats.
- All programs should endeavour to deliver a high standard of duty of care. They should do no harm, and should ensure staff are qualified, capable and screened carefully. Ensure significant agency support for ongoing training and supervision of project workers.
- Carefully assess program benefits and risks, to ensure as far as possible that the program will not further harm, traumatise or marginalise children and young people.
- Enlist, respect and incorporate children's and young people's ideas, opinions, attitudes, energy and involvement in projects. Develop programs using accessible, contemporary language children can understand and relate to. Avoid jargon.
- Link in with existing programs, especially those that provide accessible and credible services.

SCHOOLS

- Violence prevention programs are urgently required across Australia. Programs should be consistently implemented, resourced, evaluated, and supported in core curriculum.
- School programs that show the most promise include those with a social learning approach, that provide intensive interventions; get participants involved; clarify and communicate behavioural norms; and focus on a range of strategies to develop social competency such as self-control, decision making and communication skills.
- Program materials, topics and approaches appropriate to participants' age, gender and cultural background should be developed.
- Children must be provided with information on where and how to get accessible, confidential advice and assistance. There will almost certainly be children who are survivors and victims of violence in the class.
- Develop clear project policies and guidelines for dealing with disclosures, referrals, incidents and backlash from resistant students.
- Have trained, experienced facilitators.
- Programs should be linked to, and collaborate with, local services to provide support, a source of referral and up to date information on services.
- Developing an ongoing relationship with school and school staff is essential in the program establishment.
- Ongoing programs are more effective. Programs that are flexible – working in with different schools' priorities, programs and timetables – are more accessible.
- Include, train and work with teachers to support their work with students.

MEN

- Ongoing community education programs are needed and must include programs targeted at men of all ages.
- There are many men and boys in the community who will support an awareness-raising campaign. Projects must foster and harness their support.
- Intervention with adolescents is pivotal in family violence prevention. This can challenge gender stereotypes, prevent violent behaviour from becoming normalised, and offer alternative ways – based on equality -- of conducting relationships.
- Programs should target young men and boys where they congregate for work and play: schools, the military, TAFE, work sites, universities, sporting clubs.
- Prevention work must address the issue of men's contact with children where violence has occurred, and ensure women's and children's safety.
- Prevention work must empower men to become advocates for change with neighbours and friends.
- Services must be provided for boys affected by family violence.
- Don't assume that boys and men who are survivors of family violence will go on to be abusers; many do not.
- Indigenous men have indicated a willingness to discuss violence against women amongst their peers.

- Programs targeting men should be tested on a diverse range of men beforehand. Programs should reflect men's diversity, including their culture and language; whether they are gay; rural; urban; Indigenous; disabled; old; young; and sporty. Programs targeting men need to engage men at a community level, be well resourced, and should adhere or link to programs with at least minimum practice standards.
- Experience shows that women's services – when consulted, included, and given decision making authority – are willing to engage with programs addressing and targeting men.

Messages & Masculinity

- Messages need to be carefully structured to reach men; avoiding defensiveness and backlash. Non-punitive, non-blaming and non-shaming approaches have worked well.
- When engaging men, try to use messages that define manhood as non-violent without compromising messages.
- Messages must challenge harmful masculine bonding and culture.
- Be wary of approaches which appeal to men's sense of 'real' manhood or invite them to prove themselves as 'real' men.
- Develop programs for boys and young men which provide non-violent, diverse models of masculinity.
- Programs should address the social diversity of men without reinforcing racism or homophobia.
- Messages must challenge entrenched attitudes such as 'what about violence against men', or some women 'ask for it'.