

Forum evaluation

Process

As with the 2005 and 2006 Forums, an evaluation survey was developed on the basis of the Forum objectives, which were to provide an opportunity for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who are working in Indigenous family violence prevention policy or practice across the state, to:

- highlight and celebrate the good work that is being done to end family violence;
- share information and knowledge about strategies and programs that could be used effectively by others;
- promote opportunities for networking between workers in the field of Indigenous family violence prevention; and
- identify issues to be addressed and workshop/recommend strategies to do so.

The survey (see Appendix 1) was loosely divided into two sections: the first section collected quantitative data that focussed on whether the Forum had achieved its objectives; while the second section sought qualitative data to gain insights that would help to plan the next Forum. In the first section, the survey form asked participants to indicate the extent to which they agreed, using the range *'don't agree at all'*; *'don't agree much'*; *'mostly agree'*; *'agree'*; and *'strongly agree'*, with a number of statements about the Forum. In the second section, they were asked to provide comments in regard to a number of questions to guide the planning for the next Forum. As the Forum is designed specifically for the benefit of Indigenous men and women working together to end family violence, the responses of the Indigenous participants to the questions in this section are of particular interest.

The evaluation survey form was distributed at the closing of the Forum and participants were invited to complete it. The results of the evaluation are summarised below.

Results

Section 1

A total of 89 participants responded to the invitation to complete the survey. Of these 89 respondents, 60 (67.4%) identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander; and the remaining 29 (32.6%) identified as non-Indigenous.

Of the 87 respondents (97.8%) who agreed with the statement *'I like the Forum theme 'Breaking the Chains – Reclaiming our Future'*, 58 (62.5%) indicated they strongly agreed; 25 (28.1%) said they agreed; and 4 (4.5%) indicated they mostly agreed.

The vast majority of respondents (95.4%) agreed that the theme was well covered in the content of the program, with 39 (43.8%) saying that they strongly agreed.

Similarly, 85 respondents (95.5%) agreed that they both learnt new things at the Forum and can use what they have learnt in their own work or life.

Section 2

The survey also posed 7 open-ended questions, specifically about the Forum, to which participants could give multiple responses. For the purposes of analysis, responses for each question were grouped into theme areas.

Question 1: “What did you like most about the Forum?”

The following themes were evident in the responses to this question: ‘*information sharing*’, which encompassed networking, communication and yarnning circles; ‘*learning*’ which included references to particular presentations/key note addresses, and encountering new information and programs and opportunities to apply this information; ‘*empowerment*’, which reflected statements of inspiration, motivation and renewed commitment to improving family violence prevention efforts; ‘*men’s participation*’, which included references to the value men sharing their wisdom and actively demonstrating their commitment to ending family violence; and ‘*other*’, which captured comments regarding venue, food, program structure and experiences of CDFVR staff.

The three most frequently recurring themes in the participant’s comments about what they liked most about the Forum were: information sharing (n=48); learning (n=29); and ‘empowerment’ (n=11). One respondent described her/his experience of empowerment as: ‘*motivational speakers who give us strength spiritually and physically to keep helping our people*’; and another respondent commented: ‘*The atmosphere of the Forum was very empowering. I’ve been to lots of DV Forums/conferences, but nothing like this.*’

Question 2: “What did you like least?”

Fourteen respondents said there was nothing they didn’t like about the Forum. The remaining comments about what people liked least about the Forum fell into themes of ‘venue’ (n=27); ‘program structure’ (n=18); and ‘other’ (n=7).

Comments about the Forum’s venue could be further divided into themes of ‘venue management’ (eg: attitudes and behaviour of personnel) and ‘venue other’ (eg: value, quality and quantity of food; and room set-up). Sixteen participants indicated dissatisfaction with venue in terms of the food and organisation of the room; and 11 comments expressed concern about the lack of cross-cultural competence of the venue’s management personnel.

The 18 comments regarding Forum program structure referred to impressions of a full and tight program and insufficient time for adequate interaction and processing of information.

Seven remaining comments fell into the theme of ‘*other*’, and related to a variety of issues including the lack of attendance of local community and government representatives, difficulty with networking; negative perceptions of information in some presentations and discussion.

Question 3: “Would you come back next year? Why?”

Of the 89 respondents, 81 (91%) directly stated “yes” to this question, or provided affirmative comments. The reasons given for returning to next year’s Forum fell into themes of: ‘*information sharing*’ (n=34); ‘*learning*’ (n=24); ‘*monitoring progress*’, for example on outcomes of previous Forums and family violence prevention responses, (n=7); and ‘*relevance to work*’ (n=5).

Five of the 8 negative responses to this question, were motivated by unsatisfactory experiences of the venue and its management personnel. Two responses referred to reasons related to funding or processes within their organisation; and the remaining negative reply offered no further explanatory comment.

Question 4: *‘What themes or topics would you like covered in next year’s Forum?’*

This question elicited a broad range of responses, which cannot be easily collated into discrete themes. However, three recurring themes appear evident in the responses: *‘children and youth’* (child protection, effects of family violence, programs for young people, involvement of young people); *‘holistic approaches’* that embrace customary law practices, spirituality and healing; and *‘help for those who use family violence’* (behaviour change programs, existing and alternative correctional system and justice responses). Other less frequently mentioned themes included: men’s work in communities; drugs and alcohol as contributors to family violence, and elder abuse.

A total of 20 responses (13 Indigenous and 7 non-Indigenous) reflected interest in a children and youth connected theme for the 2008 Forum; 10 responses (9 Indigenous and 1 non-Indigenous) indicated interest in a holistic practices theme; and 5 responses (4 Indigenous and 1 non-Indigenous) referred to interest in a future theme of help for those who use family violence.

The wide range of responses to this question also illustrated, for some participants, a preference shift from an interactive forum style to a workshop style that focuses on practice, application of knowledge, skill development and program development. This outcome highlights a level of need amongst many to access relevant and culturally appropriate training opportunities that aim to develop or consolidate specific skill-sets.

Question 7: *‘Please provide name and contact details for any particular speaker you would like see at the next Forum’.*

The vast majority of responses to this question were provided by Indigenous participants. The purpose of this question was to elicit recommendations about future Forum presenters, but it seems that the question may have been misinterpreted because the majority of responses involved a recommendation about a speaker at this Forum. Specifically, 12 respondents requested Debbie Kilroy; 7 requested Harry Blagg; 6 requested Moogie Patu and 2 requested John Whop, all of whom had presented at this year’s Forum. Other suggestions included Greg Telford from Rekindling the Family; Mick Dodson, Director of the National Centre for Indigenous Studies at the Australian National University; Ted Wilkes, of Aboriginal Health with the School of Developmental Health, Curtin University; Dr Caroline Taylor; Sue Gordon, Perth Magistrate and Chairperson of National Indigenous Council; Debra Rose, Co-ordinator of National Network of Indigenous Women’s Legal Services; and Craig Shaw, of BlackBase.

Conclusion

Evaluation of the 2007 Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Forum indicates strong perceptions of satisfaction and value from participants, particularly in terms of opportunities to celebrate work being done by Indigenous people and organisations, share information, learn from others and feel empowered to continue the vital work of family violence prevention. As in previous years, Forum participants have provided useful insights and recommendations to be shared with relevant government bodies; as well as suggestions for the direction of future Forums. Outcomes also reinforce participants’ widespread approval and support of Forum themes that bring Indigenous men and women together to work towards solutions to Indigenous family

violence. The Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research will meet with its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group to discuss the recommendations and develop strategies to clarify and take the recommendations forward to relevant agencies. As in previous years, the Forum results will be made publicly available and the lessons from this Forum will be used to inform the development of the next one.