



2006

**Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Forum:
Men, Women and Community – Partners**



Report

2006
Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Forum:
Men, Women and Community – Partners

Presented by:
Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research
Central Queensland University, Mackay

Acknowledgements

Each year the success of the forum is dependent upon many people, including the forum participants. On behalf of the Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research (CDFVR) I wish to express our sincere gratitude to each and every one who was involved in the success of the Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Forum 2006. In particular, I would like to thank the many speakers at the forum: the keynote speakers; plenary panel presenters; and the workshop and yarning circle facilitators.

While the success of the forum implementation is due in large part to the participants and presenters, the forum itself would not be possible without a vision, and dedication to bringing this vision to reality through planning, organising and co-ordinating the very many elements required to do so effectively. Therefore, I wish to acknowledge and sincerely thank the members of CDFVR's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group for their vision and planning, particularly. We are particularly indebted to a core group within the Reference Group, specifically Jackie Huggins, Shirley Slann and Harold Fatnowna, for their generosity of time and spirit in working with us to plan and implement the forum.

I also want to acknowledge the staff of CDFVR, especially Annie Webster, Michelle Bradford, Lyndon Reilly, Kass Fenton and Clinton Rawsthorne for their dedication to the many tasks associated with the organising and co-ordination needed to bring the forum to fruition. I would also like to thank Sharon Conway for writing up the notes from the forum, which have formed the basis of this report.



Heather Nancarrow

Director

Copyright: 2006. Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research
Central Queensland University, Mackay

Introduction

The forum was attended by 110 people from across the State with a good spread of representation from urban, rural and remote communities. The majority of the participants were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, again with almost equal numbers of men and women participating.

Key-note speakers, plenary panel presenters and workshop facilitators were asked to address the theme: 'men, women and community – partners' and in some cases speakers and facilitators were asked to address specific aspects of this theme, as discussed below.

For the first time, this year's forum program included opportunities for 'yarning circles', to enable a less structured way for people to gather around particular topics for discussion. Some of the yarning circle topics were pre-determined, while others emerged as the forum progressed, with more spontaneous gatherings of people with a shared interest in a particular issue.

The forum program covered one and a half days, punctuated by a forum dinner with entertainment provided by the wonderfully talented Viv Edwards and a range of participants who offered their vocal and instrumental talents in the karaoke competition. The competition, judged by Magistrate Zac Sarra in conjunction with an appreciative audience, was jointly won by Lillian Gray from Cherbourg and Shaun Henaway, from Rockhampton.

At the closing of the forum, participants were invited to complete a brief evaluation form, and 76 participants took up that invitation. The results of the evaluation, which will guide the development of the forum program and structure for 2007, are included at the end of the report.

Keynote addresses

Keynote addresses were presented by Wesley Aird, representing the National Indigenous Council; Magistrate Zac Sarra, Brisbane Murri Court; Beatty Retchford, representing the Junkuri Lake Justice Association; and Djapirri Mununggirrit speaking on behalf of the Yolngu people of North East Arnhem Land.

Wesley Aird presented the National Framework of Principles for Delivering Services to Indigenous Australians, as communicated by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in June 2004, and provided an overview, and specific examples, of Shared Responsibility Agreements concerning the reduction of Indigenous family violence, which are in place in various jurisdictions across Australia.

Magistrate Sarra provided an overview and specific examples of practices within Brisbane Magistrates Court and the criteria for hearings in the Brisbane Murri Court. Zac emphasized the need for multi-level collaboration and cultural change at a community level to stop domestic and family violence.

Beatty Retchford presented an overview and specific examples of the Justice Group and community work on Mornington Island.

Djapirri Mununggirrit speaking on behalf of the Yolngu people of North East Arnhem Land provided an overview of the challenges, including family violence and suicide, that the community faces and the holistic responses the community has in place to respond. In a very moving presentation, Djapirri spoke of the importance of leadership and the need for recognition of the egalitarian nature of leadership across every aspect of community life. In this context, every member of the community has a leadership role and no leadership role should be considered more important than any other.

Plenary panels

The forum included three plenary panels, one on government partnerships with community; one on service provision for women; and one on working with men. Each of these is addressed, below.

1. Implementing Government and community partnerships

Jackie Huggins chaired the panel with presentations from two government department representatives: Jess Wilson from the Department of Communities; and Joann Schmider, from the Department of Child Safety. Tony Driese, from the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy was unable to attend and sent his sincere apologies.

Jess Wilson provided an overview of a number of community-based service models funded by the Department of Communities, including the Healing Services, Safe Houses and Safe Havens; she also discussed initiatives such as the annual Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month and the Ministerial Advisory Council on Domestic and Family Violence, and gave an update on projects such as the impact evaluation of the changes to the *Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 1989* and the review of practice standards for men's domestic violence perpetrator programs.

Joann Schmider provided an overview of the major reform process the Queensland Government is undertaking in child protection. She also challenged us to think outside partnerships between 'government and non-government agencies' and to recognise the important role of communities, and individual community members, within partnerships. Joann presented a comprehensive model of effective partnership arrangements that support local community owned and driven initiatives, as opposed to conventional 'top-down' models.

2. Practice models for working with men who use violence

Lyndon Reilly, CDFVR Research Worker, chaired this session that included presentations from Magistrate Annette Hennessy and Carol Willie; Shaun Henaway, Family Support Officer, Helem Yumba; and Doug Winten, Senior Practitioner, Men's Programs.

Magistrate Hennessy and Carol Willie, Department of Corrective Services, Central Queensland provided an overview and specific examples of the program in Woorabinda specifically developed for Indigenous offenders of domestic and family violence. Targeting those at risk of going to jail, the content of the program focuses on empowerment through learning about heritage and identity and includes other programs as ordered by the court. Early indications show that 60% of program participants do not engage in violent re-offending.

Shaun discussed the role of men as leaders within the family, and the need to restore men in this role. Just when some of us were worriedly starting to wonder where this was heading, he began to explain the difference between genuine leadership and the taking of power, and the relationship of this to violence with relationships.

Doug presented a very well received personal account of his journey to understanding the complexities associated with Indigenous domestic and family violence and finding solutions within Indigenous communities themselves. In concluding, Doug acknowledged that the case he was presenting was probably already known to the audience, since the content of his practice consisted, for the most part, of what the Indigenous people of Australia had in fact taught him.

3. Working across Indigenous and non-Indigenous service delivery

This panel, chaired by Viv Edwards, had three presenters: Shirley Slann, Rural and Remote Resource Worker of the North Queensland Domestic Violence Resource Service at Mt Isa (NQDVRS Mt Isa); Marlene Speechley, Co-ordinator of Nawamba House Indigenous Women's Shelter at Mt Isa; and Carole Hocking, a telephone counselor with *dvconnect*, the statewide domestic violence telephone counselling and referral service.

Shirley gave an insight into the vast area her organisation covers and an overview of the scope of services it provides. She also discussed the working relationships between the NQDVRS Mt Isa, the Queensland Police Service, Magistrate's Court Staff, the Domestic and Family Violence Combined Action Group and Nawamba House Indigenous Women's Shelter.

Marlene showcased the services provided by Nawamba House and inspired many with her overview of how Nawamba House, with few resources, managed to house women in long-term accommodation through their effective working partnership with the Department of Housing.

Carole provided an overview of her work with *dvconnect* and drew on her own experiences as a member of the stolen generation, and her return to Indigenous culture, to highlight the importance of cultural sensitivity and the need to work collaboratively across cultures to provide services to people affected by domestic and family violence.

Yarning circles

The forum provided an opportunity for yarning circles around specific issues, as well as the opportunity to convene more spontaneous yarning circles emerged from the forum. As a result yarning circles were convened around the following topics for discussion.

1. "Building Strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Men"

Lyndon Reilly facilitated this yarning circle, which considered a conceptual framework of strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and developed a mind map of what a program aimed at building strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men might look like.

2. "Mandated Programs for Men Who Use Violence"

This yarning circle, facilitated by Annette Hennessy & Carol Willie, looked at the gendered assumptions of legal services and the exclusionary practices of perpetrator program providers, whereby females are seen only as victims, never as perpetrators, which means that there are no appropriate programs available for the Indigenous women coming to the court on breaches of domestic violence orders. Their yarning circle also discussed the need for Indigenous male workers in counselling and treatment services.

3. "Training Child Safety Officers on Domestic Violence Interventions"

Joann Schmider & Willy George, Anglicare CQ's Regional Manager (Woorabinda) facilitated this yarning circle, which focussed on three questions: What does community need to know about when it comes to protecting children from family violence? What do community-based child protection agencies need to know about protecting children from family violence? And what does the Department of Child Safety need to know about protecting children from family violence? The results of this yarning circle will be incorporated into CDFVR's current work for Cooloola TAFE on the development of a learning guide to support accredited training for Child Safety Support Officers.

4. “Yarrabah Men’s Group”

David Patterson led this yarning circle with a presentation about the Yarrabah Men’s Group, highlighting its relationship with researchers, and facilitated discussion around the development and content of men’s groups.

5. Mornington island Justice Group

This yarning circle, facilitated by Beatty Retchford provided an overview of how the Justice Group on Mornington Island works, and the types of interventions enabled by working relationships across community members, government departments and government and non-government services.

6. Access to web-based information and resources

This yarning circle was facilitated by Heather Nancarrow, CDFVR Director; Karen Wilcox, Good Practice Project Officer, Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse; and Donna Maritz; National Institute of Indigenous Studies. Its purpose was to highlight the information and resources currently available through the websites of CDFVR and the Clearinghouse, and to inform participants about Donna’s current work on the development of an Indigenous Family Violence website to be hosted by the Institute of Indigenous Studies.

Workshops

The Chief Executive Officers of the Queensland Police Service and the Departments of Education, Justice, and Corrective Services were invited to send a representative to the forum to facilitate a workshop on the meaning and implementation of partnerships between their agencies and communities. The workshops presented an opportunity for these Government agencies to communicate their partnership philosophy and arrangements and to hear about where these arrangements are working well and any areas that need strengthening. The results of the workshops are presented below.

Queensland Police Service: Facilitated by Senior Sergeant Ross Patching.

This workshop recommended:

- Recognition that the Queensland Police Service (QPS) is only one part of an integrated response;
- Increased numbers of domestic & family violence units and liaison officers;
- A regular forum whereby QPS Domestic Violence Liaison Officers, Legal Aid Queensland Court Liaison Officers, and Court Support Workers can exchange information and form links as part of an integrated response;
- That Queensland Police and other agencies adopt a more integrated approach to prosecuting offences (eg. ACT scheme) and improve evidence collection.

Department of Education: Facilitated by Michelle Brown

Recommendations:

- Conduct an audit of existing education programs to identify and consolidate successful programs for Indigenous students;
- Increase cultural awareness for all students and current student teachers and classroom teachers;
- Positive reinforcement of Indigenous student successes, e.g. showcasing and sharing of good work;

- Increase Indigenous teacher aide positions and value and promote their input to Indigenous students' education;
- History syllabus should include impacts of colonisation and post colonisation issues for Indigenous people.
- Include Indigenous history, cultural awareness and positive teaching strategies as compulsory teacher education.

Department of Justice: Facilitated by Brian Kucks, Registrar Mackay Magistrates Court.

Recommendations:

- Co-ordinated funding rounds (between Governments and departments) are put in place and communities are made aware of what funding is available;
- Education opportunities are made available when respondents attend court to apply for Domestic Violence Orders so that they receive education before court to discourage belief that education is a punishment;
- Courts to employ an Indigenous worker co-ordinating services to address offender needs and behaviour and not rely on community volunteers;
- More opportunities for domestic violence cases to be heard in Murri Courts;
- Domestic violence to be brought to the notice of Community Justice Group so that early intervention, such as 'Murri Watch', can be put in place;
- Education programs recommended/mandated as part of probation.

Department of Corrective Services: Facilitated by Yme Dwarshuis.

Recommendations:

- Mandated programs for offenders in custody – parenting; healing; cultural; Indigenous art;
- Opportunities for perpetrator support groups to consult with victims of domestic violence as well as perpetrators;
- Enable victims/community justice groups to provide sentencing submissions prior to court that are signed off by community elders;
- Engage a person recognised in the Indigenous community to liaise with victims of domestic violence and the Department of Corrective Services;
- Conduct inquiry as to why Logan DV program, run by Department of Community Services and Police is no longer running;
- Alternative sentencing/periodic detention (e.g. work on outstations) for adolescents to provide them with real life skills and discourage recidivism.
- Set up a domestic violence/Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reference group to provide culturally specific advice on corrections issues.

Forum evaluation

Process

An evaluation survey form was developed on the basis of the forum objectives, which were to provide an opportunity for 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; and
- to promote opportunities for networking between workers in the field of Indigenous family violence prevention.

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 that participants 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 listed below.

Results

Section 1

A total of 76 participants responded to the invitation and completed the survey. Of the total 76 respondents to the survey, 56.6% (n = 43) identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander; 40.8% (n = 31) identified as non-Indigenous and two (2.6%) of the 76 respondents did not answer this particular question.

All respondents agreed with the statement "I liked the forum theme "Men, Women and Community – Partners". A majority of them (60.5%) said they strongly agreed with the statement, while 34.2% said they agreed, and 3.9% said they mostly agreed.

The vast majority (96%) of respondents agreed that the theme was well covered in the content of the program, with 39.5% (n = 30) of these saying that they strongly agreed.

Seventy-four (97.3%) of the respondents agreed that they learnt new things at the forum, and 72 (94.7%) of the respondents agreed that they could use what they had learnt in their own work or life.

Section 2

The three most frequent responses from Indigenous people to the question about what people liked most about the forum, were: networking (n = 8); Shaun Henaway; (n = 6); yarning circles (n = 5); and Djapirri Mununggirri's presentation on behalf of the Yolgnu (n = 5).

Seven respondents said there was nothing they didn't like about the forum, three said they didn't like the food, especially the instant tea and coffee; and a range of issues appeared twice in participants' responses. These were problems with the air-conditioning; having to choose between workshops and yarning circles; and that the yarning circles were more like workshops.

None of the total 76 respondents said they would not come back to another forum, although some said they may come back, depending on the theme. Of those identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, 91% were certain they would come back to another forum. In providing a rationale for their positive response, 11 said it was because of the opportunity to learn about others' work across the state, and to link with or catch up with other workers in the field. Seven said their response was about the atmosphere, in terms of being good fun and having a positive and passionate spirit; for some it was described as inspirational. Seven Indigenous people said they would come back to another forum specifically because they learn so much at the forums.

In response to the question about what they would like to see in next year's forum, seven Indigenous participants responded that they would like to see more on perpetrator programs and men's groups,

including evaluations. A further seven said they would like to see issues around children and young people affected by family violence being addressed, which included child protection matters; and four said they would like to see more profiling of community-based projects such as those presented this year about the Justice Group in Mornington Island and the work that the Yolgnu are doing in North-East Arnhem Land.

Conclusion

Overall, the forum was successful in achieving its objectives and forum participants have provided useful insights into potential future directions for the forum. The forum has again resulted in a number of recommendations across a range of portfolios. The nature of the recommendations reflects the value of convening a forum that provides for Indigenous men and women to work together towards solutions to Indigenous family violence, and to participate in discussions with representatives of various Government departments. 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 a strategy 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.

Appendix 1

2006 Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Forum Evaluation

1. Are you Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander? *(Please circle answer)* Yes / No

2. How much do you agree with the following statements? *(Circle your response)*

a) I liked the forum theme “Men, Women and Community – partners”:

Don't agree at all *Don't agree much* *mostly agree* *agree* *Strongly agree*

b) The theme was covered well in the Forum program:

Don't agree at all *Don't agree much* *mostly agree* *agree* *Strongly agree*

c) I learnt new things at the Forum:

Don't agree at all *Don't agree much* *mostly agree* *agree* *Strongly agree*

d) I can use what I learnt in my own work and / or life:

Don't agree at all *Don't agree much* *mostly agree* *agree* *Strongly agree*

3. What did you like most at the Forum?

4. What did you like least?

5. Would you come back next year? Why?

6. What themes, or topics, would you like covered in next year's forum?

7. Any other comments? *(write them on the back of this page)*

THANK YOU!

Have a safe trip home.