



Alternatives to Violence Project Qld

Newsletter April 2010

Notices

New Facilitators

We welcome five new facilitators to the facilitation team.

They are Alex, Jess, Larissa, Marian and Susan.

We also congratulate Richard, who is now a Lead Facilitator.

Workshops

Perhaps you know some other people who may be interested in getting involved in workshops?

Please see the Workshops for 2010 information below, and pass this information on to them.

Your assistance in promoting AVPQ workshops for 2010 is most appreciated.

In this newsletter

National Gathering	1-3
Editor's Note	1
Negative Feedback	4
Non-Violent Communication	4-5
Retreat	6
AVP in Liberia?	6
January Gathering	6

Contact us

AVPQ
PO Box 78
Sherwood Qld 4075

Ph. 07 3286 2593
Workshop Co-ord.
Mob. 0435 007 405

admin@avpq.org.au
www.avpq.org.au
ABN: 39029916740

AVP National Gathering Report

Fourteen facilitators and two supporters from NSW, NT, QLD, VIC and WA gathered at the AVP National Gathering (9-11 Jan, Adelaide) to share their experiences of AVP.

State Reports

In **QLD** there are 28 facilitators, and 22 were active in 2009. Six prison workshops and 12 training days were held. On every fourth Friday of each month members, friends and supporters of AVP meet at a local bookshop for coffee and chat. The cost for a Basic Workshop is \$125 for waged, between \$5 and \$40 for others.

In **WA** out of the 46 facilitators, 20 to 24 are active. In total, 42 various workshops as well as three meetings with inmate facilitators at Acacia prison were held last year.

An Aboriginal co-ordinator organised a successful workshop for 10 to 16 people in the Noonga Community. Facilitator training and committee meeting run once a month. About \$10,000 is received annually from an anonymous donor who is particularly interested in training for indigenous people.

AVP **NT** currently has two facilitators and is in the early stages of setting up AVP. After an 18-month recess since its first two initial workshops in November 2007, AVP NT has made a comeback with a Basic Workshop in July 2009. For the four workshops offered in 2009, 27 Basic and 8 Advanced certificates were issued.

AVP Darwin reimbursed interstate facilitators for the cost of air fares and provided accommodation and local transport. The advice and support of Malcolm Smith as treasurer and AVP NSW, especially the Blue Mountains group, is very much appreciated.

AVP **VIC** has a core of 3 to 4 facilitators. No prison workshops are running at

the moment. The 2-3 workshops a year have been a struggle to maintain. There was one Advanced and a Basic with 10 participants. AVP VIC is relocating to Borderlands, which is a Peace and Social Justice Hub with good potential for more workshops and joint marketing with others from the Hub. Finances are always difficult though AVP VIC did receive a grant from the Quaker Peace and Social Justice Fund. A refresher is held once every 6-8 weeks to run exercises and generate interest and energy. T-shirts are printed to raise awareness of AVP.

AVP **NSW** has four main branches: Sydney, Newcastle, Blue Mountains and Canberra, with 75 registered facilitators. Monthly council meetings are held and facilitators also conduct phone conferences. Sydney provides regular community programmes, support groups and monthly public email newsletters.

HIP has continued to provide HIP workshops and training workshops

▶cont. p. 2

Editors' Note

By Kathy and Michelle

Already three months into 2010. Wasn't it only last week that we were excitedly anticipating the countdown to the new year!? We hope this newsletter finds you well and that your 2010 has kicked off with good New Year's non-violent resolutions (smile).

In this issue, we have included the State Reports and recommendations from the facilitator retreat at the AVP National Gathering earlier this year.

This newsletter also includes an article on Non-Violent Communication (by Lesley, pages 4-5) - we often react from habit but the pattern of violence can be interrupted.

Workshops for 2010

We will have workshops in Brisbane, Cairns, Borallon Correctional Centre and will offer HIPP workshops for young people through In-Sync. We will also be offering Snapshots of AVP for small groups of young people through BYS.

Below is the calendar for Brisbane community workshops, held at PCYC Ascot OSHC (the old Ascot Preschool) 56 Barlow Street, Ascot. Ph. 0435 007 405.

Basic level Feb 6, 7	Basic level Mar 6, 7	Second level Apr 10, 11	Third level May 29, 30	Basic level Jun 25, 26	Basic level Jul 24, 25	Second level Sept 25, 26	Third level Nov 20, 21
-------------------------	-------------------------	----------------------------	---------------------------	---------------------------	---------------------------	-----------------------------	---------------------------

▶ *from p. 1* for students and teachers. It has also developed a Circle learning process which involved embedding Restorative Practice and HIP learning in all curriculum within the 40 Sydney region schools.

As there is currently no organiser at AVP Blue Mountains, the work is all done by facilitators. No community workshops were held in 2009 though there are plans for some for 2010, together with a residential workshop in May. A lively group has developed in Canberra with approximately 12 trained facilitators. The local jail has not yet allowed groups to run due to clashes with other programmes but it looks hopeful for the future.

Discussions and Brainstorms

Team Building:

- Community workshop facilitators need to spend more time together going through team contract. Lead facilitator needs to authorise agreement if there is no consensus.
- We need to develop more honesty between facilitators, especially if someone is not happy about how an exercise was done.
- We need to remember we are all teachers and all learners.

Reporting:

- When the system works well the reports go to Management Committees and the recommendations are tabled and followed through.
- Some groups send the reports to all facilitators or read out recommendations before the next Basic.
- They are not always easy to find on the website - we need to broaden the feedback and provide it in dot points...
- We need to look at proposed changes to exercises, perhaps make the first page of the reports non-confidential and include oral evaluations; make sure our evaluations and reports are practical and to the point.

Setting Up:

- Jo Vallentine has links with Broome which may lead to AVP being established there.
- David Johnson is supporting AVPQ in developing a new group in Cairns.
- Need people to give tasters, 3-4 hours snapshot of AVP.
- In Bathurst one female Aboriginal staff worker got AVP in and did the 3 levels herself. Often what is needed is just one enthusiastic person to kick-start the process.

Aboriginal Programs

The Gathering we used was one popular with indigenous inmates, i.e. My mother's place, my father's place...

We then talked about experiences, challenges and work with indigenous people in and out of prison. We brainstormed idea in threes for working with indigenous people and reported back: clowning, humour, drawing on their humour, learning different words, specially designed pamphlet [WA].

Sensitivity and respect to know when to intervene when stories are told. Try to train and use indigenous facilitators; it works well. Acknowledge traditional owners and our own prejudices and preconceptions. Thinking of an addiction we no longer wanted - then drew a line in the sand and put the addiction on the other side (this is a great exercise to do with inmates, especially indigenous inmates).

New Ideas

AVPQ led us through a talk of new ideas, fresh input and perspectives, including Gathering, Brainstorm Carousel, Concentric Circles, Recommendations on Giving and Receiving Feedback, Light and Lively, Fishbowl role Play. Please request for details if interested.



Pictures from the National Gathering, 9-11 January 2010.

The National Gathering - Terry's view

By Terry

The biggest thing that I came away with from Adelaide (AVP National Gathering) was that to be able to provide workshops and grow facilitators, an AVP group needs to have some money and a central administration person.

AVPQ has been very fortunate in that we have had three major donations over the past 10 years, meaning we have not had to worry about finances. And in the past three or four years we have had Heather, who has been the rock on which most of the recent growth has relied.

The strongest AVP states are New South Wales (although they were not well represented at Adelaide), Western Australia (who have Sally as the stalwart) and of course Queensland.

The exciting thing was the dynamism of the work going on around Australia and the way that the various states are overcoming their challenges.

As a group we facilitated a session at the Gathering that was about how to give and receive negative feedback. The session went well and we had some great ideas about what would be the best ways to achieve this.

For me, one of the main issues that came out of the session is that as facilitators we should say at the initial team meeting how we want the feedback to be given. When we discussed this at our recent afternoon tea none of the facilitators there (myself included) had ever considered how we want to have negative feedback given to us.

We also discussed how, by knowing your co-facilitators, it can help you to tell them things they perhaps do not want to hear.

The next AVP National Gathering will be in Perth in 2012 and I hope that we can send another team of at least five to that gathering. I would like to see facilitators who are just getting started going to these gatherings and getting new ideas and inspiration from meeting AVP-ers from other states.

The National Gathering - Heather's view

By Heather

What can I say?

It was bloody hot - ridiculously so.

It was a lot of fun and it went to interesting depth.

It was really useful to get a sense of how each state was going, and to see the ways people are innovating around AVP work.

WA seems to be booming (I think if we did a discourse analysis of WA, we may find that 'booming' is the word most associated with WA).

The range of people was good - not all one kind of person, despite an overwhelming majority of women.

The countervailing voice was heard - it wasn't just 'nice'.

I felt completely safe there - interpersonally, that is.

The National Gathering - Courtney's view

By Courtney

I really enjoyed the chance to meet and get to know AVPers from across the country. It was really interesting to hear about how other states are running their workshops for Community, Prison and with young people. I was interested to hear about how WA are running workshops with the indigenous community, and learning new "light and livelies" and activities was an absolute bonus. It was refreshing and inspiring and nice to feel part of something bigger in a movement of peace.



Pictures from the National Gathering, 9-11 January 2010.

Recommendations for Giving Negative Feedback

At the National Gathering in January, members created these recommendations on the topic of giving and receiving feedback, which can be difficult at times.

- Walking the talk of AVP - quality over quantity.
- In team building or a team contract, ask "How do you want feedback, what's your preferred way to live with feedback?" then follow through. For example, do you prefer to be not told at all; told in a roundabout way; told straight up?
- Bi-directional process (each person has a turn) in spirit of humility, openness and empowerment.
- Team building is not just AVP process - its about building relationships. Get off process to follow personal issues, for example "What's on top?" Fellowship-bonding-fun together develop friendships.
- Don't cut corners on the relationship building and feedback. Spend the time and plenty of it (sharing a meal and a drink helps).
- Self appraisal comes first in debriefing that may be considered critical.
- Listening is to hear deep internal discussions around relationships. It needs time.
- Awareness of our own limitations - we learn through the modelled behaviour of more experienced facilitators.
- Make affirmations, specific and relevant; Kind, Important and True - give positive feedback that is KIT.
- Steer between projection and observation - acknowledge that some of what we feed back might be projection. Use observation without judgement to help steer.
- Give feedback straight after the session.
- Don't let negative feedback overcome the purpose of feedback. What are the priorities? Critique with care.
- During feedback, Workshop MC (or Lead or experienced facilitator) isolates peoples needs and prioritizes the balance of:
 - When to stop due to escalating conflict and agree to come back together later, or
 - Whether to continue and work through the issues.
- Actively encourage workshop participants to give feedback, to be open and honest, privately or on paper. Model the practice of open and honest feedback in a workshop with facilitators so that participants are more likely to do the same.
- Organisational values - does the structure of the organisation align with and reinforce AVP values? Tweak our organisational structures to match values.
- A Structure for feedback: Listen; take time; affirm, appreciate; empathise; find common ground; ask about feelings; suggestions to move forward in baby

steps. The future focus gives those being critiqued a way to move beyond criticism.

Structure

The structure for feedback can include the following:

- Make an I-statement that indicates a wish for something to have been done differently by the team.
- Check out how your I-statements have been received - talk about feelings.

And/or

- Respond to these questions:
 - What worked for you?
 - What did you do that got a positive response from the other/s?
 - What positive impact did you have (even if only a bit)?
 - What could you do more of or less of or differently to amplify the positive effect?

Non-Violent Communication

By Lesley

I'm delighted to write something about Non-violent Communication (NVC) because I value the process and the insights it brings. And I'm nervous because it'll take more than a few words to convey this process. I hope this will whet your appetite!

NVC was developed by Marshall Rosenberg based on his experiences and the teachings of men such as Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Maslow and Carl Rogers. In his book, 'Nonviolent communication: A language of life', Rosenberg says, "Believing that it is our nature to enjoy giving and receiving in a compassionate manner, I have been preoccupied most of my life with two questions. What happens to disconnect us from our compassionate nature, leading us to behave violently and exploitatively? And conversely, what allows some people to stay connected to their compassionate nature under even the most trying circumstances?" These words touch me, and the questions seem to hold a key to the roots of our connection and disconnection, of compassion and violence.

Does violence originate from our actions or our words? Perhaps it's a chicken or egg situation; violence begets anger begets violence. Commonly we react from habit, meeting situations with a familiar reaction of judgment, blame or defensiveness. This pattern of violence can be interrupted. Becoming aware of what actually happened, the need it did or didn't meet for us and the feeling this evoked, we can respond instead with clarity and honesty, staying connected to our integrity whilst paying respectful attention to another.

Any situation we witness is subject to our perception, based on our lifetime of experiences. Through this filter we respond with our own particular brand of judgment and blame. Recognising this we open to the possibilities of deeper, more honest connection with ourselves and others. To realise there are more than two

▶from p. 4 ways (right and wrong) to see a situation can be a profound shift. We can step back, and observe. This means letting go of our judgments and viewing the situation with complete detachment (which ain't easy). We'll keep judging, and we can keep stepping back and looking at what actually happened. "Bloody idiot! You made me spill my coffee" may become "When that person walked past with a backpack, it knocked my elbow and my coffee spilt over my newspaper". The inward observation of what actually happened brings clarity.

Rosenberg says that all we ever do is try to get our needs met. Every human shares these universal needs in order to survive and flourish: water, food, touch, communication, connection, respect, choice, spontaneity and freedom. Searching for meaning we need awareness, learning and purpose. This isn't a definitive or exhaustive list, but perhaps enough to illustrate that your needs are the same as mine and that we may find empathy in that.

Our attempts to get our needs met aren't always successful. If we express our need for support like this: "You're so bloody lazy!" we're unlikely to get what we're looking for. We may try: "If you don't do the dishes tonight, you're not going to the party". That may (or may not) get the dishes done. It probably won't meet our need for support and will certainly be at the expense of our needs for connection, ease and co-operation. Connection - to others, nature and our higher self - is a primary need.

Feelings arise as a result of needs being met, or unmet. Again, through our personal filter. A roller-coaster ride may evoke feelings of nausea and fear, because my needs for safety and comfort aren't met. My children may feel excited and energized, meeting their needs for adventure and freedom. The statements "Roller coasters are terrible things" and "Roller coasters are great" don't give a lot of scope for connection and understanding. Trivial examples, but as the kids grow up the subjects turn to things like drugs, alcohol and knives. Find the universal needs that parents and young people are trying to meet, and there's more room to move.

We may make a Request with the awareness gained from (1) a clear Observation without evaluation, (2) recognizing that we/the other are trying to meet a universally-shared Need, and (3) acknowledging the Feelings arising from that unmet need. It's easier to hear than a demand made from habitual response. To check whether your question constitutes a request or a demand, just see how you react if the answer is "No"! Again, there's quite a process involved here.

These are the four components of NVC: Observation (O), Feelings (F), Needs (N), and Request (R). There's a format: "When I remember ... (O) I feel ... (F) because I'm needing ... (N) and would you be willing to ... (R)". This can be a powerful learning tool within the safety of a workshop, and sound very odd in real life! Don't try this at home. I've been told in no uncertain terms to "Stop NVCing me". These days I focus more on developing awareness, less on "Doing NVC". I don't want to turn it into a dogma.

I was asked to follow up the theme of giving negative feedback that's been up for much discussion. I feel nervous about the term 'negative feedback'. It conjures up an image of someone in authority, who knows what's best or what's the right thing to do, telling another what's wrong with the way they do it. That approach is likely to be met with defense or submission, neither of which will make further communication easy. It's uncomfortable and scary for both parties.

When there's conflict, both parties need empathy - they need to be heard, with compassion. If I want to tell you something that bugs me about your behaviour I can start with self-empathy, by looking at my own needs, why I'm responding this way, and what I can do about it. And I can guess at what might be going on for you, which at least reminds me that you have your reasons. There's a process involved here, some inner reflection. To truly hear you, I need to put aside my pre-conceptions, my judgments, my "I'd never do such a thing" and simply be present with you. That's not easy, after years of listening with one ear while the other half of my brain figures out what I'm going to say when it's my turn.

I love Kathy's example of the workshop leader, for his clarity, compassion and presence. The leader said nothing until we were doing the evaluation sheet at the end of the session and then commented gently 'I would like to have been able to discuss what happened in that exercise.'

Phew! This is a big topic. There's so much more I'd like to say, and far more to be gained by learning and practicing this process, rather than reading about it. Marshall's book is available online, and also 'Nonviolent communication workbook: A practical guide for individual, group or classroom study' by Lucy Lui. Both of these are in the Borallon library. The workbook was initially written for inmates wishing to learn NVC, with directions for setting up practice groups. It's used widely on the inside and the outside these days.

Contacts, resources and more info from www.nvcaustralia.com and www.cncv.org.

Retreat

The Management Committee is organising a retreat for all members who are interested in facilitation. This includes those who are not facilitators at the moment, but would still like to attend.

The retreat will take place from 4 to 5 June. The location is in a gorgeous spot a few hours north of Brisbane, and you are welcome to come for all or only some of the time; we recommend that you stay for the whole retreat to get the most out of it, as well as have time to relax in the peaceful surroundings.

Accommodation includes:

- Dormitory style (four dorms with six beds each)
- A cabin (two double beds)
- Camping (for those who want to brave the weather).

The food options include buying meals at a nearby market, getting someone to cater all meals, or self-catering. For these purposes we will need definite attendance numbers by 21 May.

We are going to ask people who are interested to make a contribution towards costs. AVPQ will fund a basic rate and then individuals will be asked to make up the difference. We estimate that the weekend will cost individuals less than \$50 each, excluding food and transport. However, if you are paid a full wage the cost will be more than if you are a povvie.

This practice of underwriting some of the costs of our trainings will be an ongoing policy because we are nearly out of money.

Please contact admin@avpq.org.au if you are interested. Just a reminder, we need definite and final numbers by 21 May.

Other news

Along with Kathy and Michelle, the other member of our newsletter team is Gaby, who takes all our information and formats it into the newsletter you see. We are very grateful to her for doing this.

January Gathering

By Kathy

Nineteen of us met at the Quaker Meeting House on the afternoon of 23 January for afternoon tea. We were a varied group, including facilitators, three new members who were interviewed that afternoon about becoming facilitators, those who had attended workshops and one person who was looking forward to her first Basic workshop. I think we all enjoyed the chance to catch up with each other after the Christmas break.

Before tea we had a short meeting. We began with a gathering, talking about our differing connections with AVPQ and went on to hear about the National Gathering from those who had attended. Despite the 40 degree temperatures Adelaide produce during that weekend, everyone had enjoyed it and found it very worthwhile. We also talked about the topic that has been concerning facilitators in Queensland: how to give and receive negative feedback, which was raised at the National Gathering and will be discussed further at the Crystal Waters weekend in June. Some helpful suggestions were made. We finished that section of the afternoon by going around the circle giving our hopes for ourselves and AVPQ for this year.

AVP in Liberia?

Information from Doug Crouch, of AVP USA

There are two men in Liberia, Peter Denkar and Matthew Digst, who are trying to prepare for AVP to come there. Although these men have been told it will not happen quickly, they already have a list of more than 30 people who want to take the workshops, with more interested but not on the list yet.

Liberia had had a series of wars prevail for the past 14 years, and now finally they are over, but the people of Liberia are now returning from refugee camps to face a destroyed infrastructure. For example, they have no regular electricity, and run a generator at a cafe to get on the Internet. Peter and Matthew are searching for people to help them bring Liberia into better times, peaceful times.

The men have solicited the assistance of a local Baptist church to provide space for the workshops. The church pastor is aware it is to be non-religious, and that the workshops are long and intended to continue over a long period of time. He has also signed up to take a workshop, even though there is currently no group to provide them.

David Zarembka has kindly provided Peter and Matthew with information on the basic overview of phases involved in developing a program developing. Please let me know if you are interested in helping, as I will not be going to Liberia myself.

This information came about by a chance meeting online, and has developed over the last couple weeks. No amount of telling these men that it would take much time has deterred them from finding out what they can do to prepare, and nothing has stopped them from doing it. I do not know what to tell them, but it is clear they are sincerely seeking our assistance. Contact information is available for anyone wishing to explore this more.



Participants of the 23 January gathering