

# WESNET's Capacity Building Grants Project 2008-09



Evaluation of a grant program for early  
intervention and prevention projects for  
domestic and family violence



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## Executive Summary

In May 2008, the Australian Government approached the Women's Services Network Inc (WESNET) to manage a Capacity Building Grants program on its behalf. The project brief was to seek applications from Service Providers to build their capacity to support victims of domestic and family violence within an early intervention and prevention framework.

The project was designed to be a part of the work informing the development of the National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children's *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children* ("the Plan") – an initiative funded by the Australian Government that aims to better protect women and children from domestic violence and sexual assault. The Capacity Building Grants project was designed to identify and document examples of good practice processes, opportunities and models.

WESNET coordinated and managed a capacity building grants program, offering grants to non-government, not-for-profit organisations across Australia providing support to women and children affected by domestic or family violence. A total funding pool of \$500,000 was provided to the successful services to carry out projects to be completed by June 2009.

The overall objective of the project was to build the capacity of organisations to support victims of domestic or family violence through early intervention and prevention approaches.

The goals and objectives of the project were as follows:

- A. Harness the practice wisdom of the domestic and family violence sector and support them to carry out and/or document innovative and creative ideas for early intervention and prevention activities.
- B. Support other community-based organisations to identify opportunities and measures to undertake strategic intervention on domestic and family violence within an early intervention/preventative framework.
- C. Build community capacity to reject and respond to domestic and family violence.
- D. Focus on prevention and early intervention with at-risk communities and populations, reducing risk, building resilience and protective factors, and building capacity of communities to address and solve their problems.
- E. Foster collaboration between local agencies in the prevention of domestic and family violence, including through mentoring, protocol development, and cross-sector training opportunities. The agencies could include refuges and shelters and other domestic and family violence services, SAAP services, police, the legal system, health workers, child protection, education, childcare workers, and others.

There were two levels of grants funded: larger **Community-Based Project Grants** of between \$10,000 and \$50,000 (exclusive of GST) to undertake capacity building projects for services to implement or document a community-based project and **Small Intervention Project Grants** of up to \$10,000 (exclusive of GST) to undertake small interventions in a community that enhance early intervention or prevention opportunities or outcomes.

Just under 640 registrations of interest were received and 157 applications were received: 125 for community-based projects, and 32 for small interventions. The total funding sought was \$4.6m. WESNET convened a grants assessment team (GAT) to read and assess all the applications against set selection criteria. Twenty-two applications were selected for a total funding amount of \$506,579. Several applications were highly worthy of funding but were not able to be accommodated within the \$500,000 grant funds. Some of the unsuccessful applications reinforced, for WESNET, the importance of always ensuring the safety of women and children as the highest priority in any work relating to domestic and family violence. In hindsight, WESNET felt that all applicants should have been asked to specifically define how the risk and safety of women and children would have been managed during the proposed projects, as many applicants had clearly not considered the risk and safety issues inherent in their proposed activities. As it was, it was the expertise on the grants assessment team that enabled WESNET to ensure that all proposals funded were mindful of risk and safety.

From a process perspective, the grant program ran well and there were no compliance failures. Grantees

appeared to welcome the general lack of red-tape in the reporting requirements and some significant outcomes were achieved with the Small Intervention Grants for well under \$10,000.

The domestic and family violence sector is strongly focused on delivering services to clients in need. This often means that there is neither the time nor spare resources for services to document or capture innovative practice wisdom or new and innovative prevention or early intervention activities or opportunities. This project specifically offered funding for services that might want to document a particular practice in place in their organisation, or where they have expertise in a particular facet of early intervention and prevention work and would like to share this with others. Some services used the grant funding to undertake important work with an at-risk community through an opportunity they had identified but had not previously had the capacity to undertake. Some services captured and shared their in-house knowledge, some brought expertise in from outside to build their capacity, while other used the contributions and stories of women.

An emerging theme that linked many of the domestic and family violence sector-run projects was that they had capacity building projects ready to go when they applied for funds. The organisations had identified areas where (and how) they needed to build capacity and they just needed to gather funds to get the projects into operation.

Australia is at the forefront of significant policy and legislative changes related to domestic and family violence. This constantly invokes the need for capacity building for both specialist and non-specialist services to keep up with the emerging policies and practices. Although much of this can be considered to be the core business of services, many organisations still struggle to find sufficient funding to be able to fully understand new legislative changes, processes, pathways, services and demand.

Women experiencing violence often need and use the services of a variety of organisations. One of the grant program's objectives was to engage some of those other community-based organisations (sitting outside the specialist domestic and family violence sector) to undertake projects around early intervention and prevention of domestic and family violence.

There were several successful projects funded that met this objective. Some of the most successful used a community activity as a diversion or disguise to enable women potentially experiencing violence to meet regularly in safety. Others used a relatively small amount of funding to seek training or resources about domestic and family violence to enhance their service.

By its very nature, domestic and family violence is a hidden issue in our society. Weeks and Oberin (2004) noted that "Among the important concerns of services about women's experience of violence has been the lack of funded capacity of services to reach out to women sufficiently early. Services have also been concerned about not always reaching those groups of women for whom seeking help is deep 'shame'."

WESNET also funded a range of projects from organisations seeking to build community capacity to reject and respond to family violence, stimulate change in community attitudes to the unacceptability of violence against women, and reach women who wouldn't usually access specialist services. Other projects funded focused on building the capacity for non-specialist services, as well as the domestic and family violence family violence-specific services, to increase the capacity and expertise they have around early intervention activities. The evaluation found that capacity building projects often operate on more than one level, and can assist communities and individuals at the same time.

The impact of domestic and family violence for women who are also members of an at-risk group or community was a particular focus for the grants project. Marginalisation can be experienced in many ways and practically every project funded targeted a marginalised or at-risk group.

Current best practice shows the importance of integrated and coordinated services are integral to preventing women and children falling through the cracks. There is more likelihood of prevention occurring when the systems are working together with shared understandings of the issue, shared messages and shared responses.

To this end, WESNET funded a number of projects that foster collaboration between local agencies, particularly where new relationships were to be formed or structural partnerships and linkages were proposed. The evaluation found that there are sometimes difficulties in cross-sector collaborations.

Finally, the evaluation found that ensuring the safety of, or providing ongoing support to participants was another recurring issue affecting some of the projects funded. Even though the projects were focused on early intervention and prevention (i.e. not on crisis or service delivery), there were disclosures from participants that needed to be handled professionally, safely and appropriately. Unfortunately, domestic and family violence affects many women and children, and any activity in relation to domestic and family violence needs to recognise and be prepared that victims may come forward, and may need referral to appropriate services.

The evaluation findings are summarised here.

## Findings

1. There was significant demand for capacity building funding from both the domestic and family violence sector and 'allied' areas. WESNET received 157 applications seeking a total of \$4.6m. Only 22 projects could be funded from the \$0.5m allocated to the program. Organisations still regularly contact WESNET to see if further grant funding is available.
2. There was evidence from some of the applications received that many services are struggling with programs for which they are unable to obtain a recurrent funding source. There is a great need to capacity build organisations as they are now doing more than just providing shelter and support.
3. When seeking proposals, or funding programs, for early intervention and prevention of domestic and family violence:
  - (a) it is important to have appropriately skilled and qualified members on the selection panel who can differentiate between proposals which maximise the safety of women and children and the accountability of perpetrators and those that do not;
  - (b) applicants should be asked to set out how they would manage risk and safety.
4. The provision of feedback to unsuccessful applicants can be capacity building in itself. It can provide constructive advice to organisations about improving for future submissions or alerting them that certain aspects of their proposed program may not be in line with current best practice.
5. Having appropriately qualified panel members who are across policy and practice across Australia and internationally for grant selection can prevent 'reinventing the wheel' or funding interventions and activities that may be new to a region but have been tried and documented elsewhere.
6. Generally the grants program proceeded smoothly with no compliance failures. The following issues were noted:
  - (a) Many grantees found the short timeframe provided to complete their projects was problematic. By the time the grants were selected and contracted and then time was set aside at the end of the project to enable WESNET to meet its reporting obligations, the projects had around 7 months to complete the projects, including over the holiday period, which caused delays in some instances.
  - (b) Events beyond the control of grantees affected the progress of some projects, for example the Sudan crisis, the collapse of an airline in outback NSW/Qld and the Victorian bushfires.
  - (c) Early intervention and prevention programs can often lead to disclosures from either participants or employees about experiences of violence. It is important that projects are managed by or have ready access to appropriately qualified expertise to provide skilled risk assessment, management, support and referral if needed.
7. WESNET suggests that indicators for measuring early intervention and prevention activities, should be less focussed on service delivery and could focus on measures such as the numbers of participants, changes in attitudes, timeliness of access to services and qualitative information such as meaningful engagement across sectors and access to information.
8. The grants gave several organisations the opportunity to document their own practice wisdom, and resulting in a tangible document for others in the sector to use.
9. A familiar theme in many of these domestic and family violence sector-run projects was that they had capacity building projects ready to go when they applied for funds. The organisations had identified areas where they needed to build capacity and just needed to gather funds to get the projects into operation.
10. Several of the projects confirmed for WESNET that the use of women's own stories and experiences of violence adds a human element to early intervention and prevention activities that extends well beyond the selected target audience. Women's narratives can profoundly affect the work-practices

- of workers in the sector and be very empowering to the individual women telling their stories.
11. Community-based organisations can benefit greatly from accessing the advice or participation of a domestic and family violence “expert”. Potential benefits can include:
    - (a) ensuring the project to be undertaken focuses appropriately on the safety of women and children;
    - (b) ensuring that the right messages about domestic and family violence are disseminated, and that myths are not inadvertently promulgated;
    - (c) staff in the community-based organisations are prepared for and have appropriate skills to manage disclosures from participants.
  12. Some of the more successful projects were those carried out by non-sector organisations that were able to disguise early intervention and prevention activities as other activities. This enabled women experiencing violence to gain information and advice and support without ‘alerting’ their partners. However, it is crucial that activities of this nature are underpinned by a good understanding of domestic and family violence, and if this expertise is not available in house, it should be obtained from specialist domestic and family violence services before undertaking similar activities.
  13. There were some very good outcomes from the projects funded in the under \$10,000 category, demonstrating that much can be achieved on a very small budget in local communities. The administration and reporting requirements of smaller amounts of funding needs to be proportional so community organisations are actually willing to seek smaller grants.
  14. Capacity building projects often operate on more than one level. They not only build capacity and raise awareness in the target audience or the community, but also have a therapeutic or empowering impact for individuals.
  15. Many organisations have projects ready to go and just need to obtain a source of funding in order to implement projects that focus on early intervention and prevention or known gaps in their service delivery in this area.
  16. Despite anecdotal evidence that it is difficult to locate and fund early intervention and prevention programs that successfully engage with at-risk and marginalised groups, WESNET had no difficulty. Nearly every project funded successfully targeted and engaged with an at-risk or marginalised group. And the grant projects demonstrated that many domestic and family violence services are right on top of identifying need and opportunity with these groups.
  17. The number and range of projects clearly shows that the domestic and family violence sector can easily build capacity within the communities in which they operate with small and innovative projects.
  18. The nature of the projects ranged widely. Some projects worked with a specific group not currently accessing services or information, where the message affecting specific individuals may have had a ripple out effect to their families and community. At the other end of the scale, there were projects that engaged all the refugees and undertook structural and lasting change about a certain marginalised and at risk group as a whole. Early intervention and prevention of domestic and family violence can and should take a variety of forms and work at multiple levels.
  19. When working with some at-risk communities it is important to consider and work with the inherent power structures in those communities. For example, the importance of working through Elders where they were significant to the group.
  20. Funding the provision of food and informal gatherings can be very cost effective and a good way to establish rapport with disadvantaged groups.
  21. Coordinated Community Responses take time to establish and there is no “one size fits all” approach that can be applied as each community is different and at different stages in its development. It takes time and commitment, and a shared understanding of language and concepts across different agencies is crucial.
  22. Collaboration can be highly mutually beneficial for services that are often resource and time poor as expertise and knowledge are shared but so are the financial and resource demands.



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## Introduction

In May 2008, the Australian Government approached the Women's Services Network Inc (WESNET) to manage a Capacity Building Grants program on their behalf. The project brief was to seek applications from Service Providers to build their capacity to support victims of domestic and family violence within an early intervention and prevention framework.

The project was designed to be a part of the work informing the development of the National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children's *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children* ("the Plan") – an initiative funded by the Australian Government, that aims to better protect women and children from domestic violence and sexual assault. The Capacity Building Grants project was designed to identify and document examples of good practice processes, opportunities and models.

## About WESNET

Established in 1992, the Women's Services Network (WESNET) is a national women's peak advocacy body that works on behalf of women and children who have experienced domestic and family violence.

With almost 400 members across Australia, WESNET represents a range of organisations and individuals including women's refuges, shelters, safe houses, outreach services, housing services, counselling and information/ referral services.

Through its National Office and Secretariat, and via its large national network of members and associate members, WESNET plays an important role in identifying unmet needs, canvassing new and emerging issues, facilitating policy and sector debate and lobbying government to provide improved responses to the problem of domestic and family violence within our community, in partnership with non-government stakeholders.

WESNET advances responses which:

- (a) ensure the safety of women and children;
- (b) empower them to live free of violence; and
- (c) improve the social, political and economic status of women.

WESNET works within a feminist framework that promotes an understanding of domestic and family violence as gendered violence. In addition WESNET acknowledges that women and children's experiences are also intrinsically shaped by their ethnicity, culture, ability, age, sexuality, class and religion.

## Project Description

WESNET coordinated and managed a capacity building grants program, offering grants to non-government, not-for-profit organisations across Australia providing support to women and children impacted by domestic or family violence. A total funding pool of \$500,000 was provided to the successful services to carry out projects to be completed by June 2009.

The overall objective of the project was to build the capacity of organisations to support victims of domestic or family violence through early intervention and prevention approaches. The project aimed to:

- harness the practice wisdom of the domestic and family violence sector and support them to carry out and/or document innovative and creative ideas for early intervention and prevention activities
- support other community-based organisations to identify opportunities and measures to undertake strategic intervention within an early intervention/preventative framework
- build community capacity to reject and respond to domestic and family violence

- focus on prevention and early intervention with at-risk communities and populations, reducing risk, building resilience and protective factors, and building capacity of communities to address and solve their problems
- foster collaboration between local agencies in the prevention of domestic and family violence, including through mentoring, protocol development, and cross-sector training opportunities. The agencies could include refuges and shelters and other domestic and family violence services, SAAP services, police, the legal system, health workers, child protection, education, childcare workers, and others.

There were two levels of grants funded:

- **Community-Based Project Grants** - Grants for projects up to \$50,000 (exclusive of GST) to undertake capacity building projects for services to implement a community-based project which trials or documents new approaches into the early intervention or prevention of domestic or family violence. Twelve grants were funded.
- **Small Intervention Project Grants** - Grants generally providing between \$1,000 (exclusive of GST) and \$10,000 (exclusive of GST) to undertake small interventions into their community that enhance early intervention or prevention opportunities or outcomes. Ten grants were funded.

This report gathers the outcomes and case studies from the project and documents how the capacity of organisations has improved or benefited from their project grant and how this might benefit other organisations.

This report is in three major parts:

- Section 1 – examines the processes undertaken during the project
- Section 2 – discusses the program outputs and outcomes
- Section 3 – provides a brief summary of each of the 22 projects funded under the grant program.

## Section 1. - Processes

### Governance and management

The WESNET Committee consists of a Chairperson, a representative from each State and Territory, a representative for Indigenous women, and a representative for women from immigrant, refugee and non-English speaking backgrounds. All members of the Committee contribute their time on a volunteer basis.

At the commencement of the project, the Committee convened a meeting to establish the arrangements and appoint a project officer. Day to day operations of the project were managed by a contracted Project Coordinator, Karen Bentley, with support from the in-house administrative officer at the National Secretariat. The project was oversighted by the then Victorian Representative, Julie Oberin, who was designated the role of Project Manager. These, three people made up the “main team” managing the project. Documents, including a project plan, monitoring and evaluation framework, communication plan and program guidelines, were written and disseminated amongst the committee members.

**Table 1 – Governance and management arrangements for the Capacity Building Grants project**

Role		Responsibility
Project Manager	Main team	Supervise and support Project Coordinator. Primary conduit between committee and project coordinator
Project Coordinator		Day to day management of grants program.
Admin Officer		Provide administrative assistance and communication support. Keep financial records and make payments.
Project Management Committee (PMC)		Overall responsibility for decision making in relation to the program to ensure compliance with the OFW funding agreement.  Manage finances.  Met regularly by teleconference or face-to-face.  Reported regularly to the WESNET Committee.  Available to manage any disputes (there were none).
Project Steering Group		As for PMC but also included representative from the Office For Women.
Stage 1 Working Group		Provide support and direction to project coordinator.
Stage 2 Working Group		Provide support and direction to project coordinator.
Stage 3 Working Group and Grant Assessment Team		Provide support and direction to project coordinator and assess applications.
Stage 4 Working Group		Provide support and direction to project coordinator.
Jurisdictional Contact Officers		Provide support and mentor role for projects depending on State/Territory. See Guidelines at Appendix 2

A Project Management Committee was established comprising five Committee Members including the Project Manager. This group also met as the Project Steering Group from time to time when a representative from the Office For Women was included. This group provided support and advice to the main team.

Four working groups were set up to provide assistance and support to the Project Manager, project officer and administrator. These aligned with the stages of the project, and shared the load between the volunteer committee members.

Each Committee member also undertook to be a primary point of contact and support for the grants awarded in their jurisdiction. The role and function of these 'jurisdictional contact officers' was to:

- support successful applicants carry out their projects.
- act as liaison point between successful applicants and the Project Management Committee (PMC) and the Project coordinator.
- undertake unobtrusive monitoring of projects progress and provide early warning to project coordinator if required.

## Initial phase

The availability of the grants was announced through the WESNET email networks and on the WESNET website on 18 August 2008 and applications closed on 19 September 2008. Applicants were directed to a web page where they could download a grant kit containing the application guidelines and a template proforma for the two types of grants. A blog for the grants process was also set up on the Blogger™ website at [www.wesnetgrants.blogspot.com](http://www.wesnetgrants.blogspot.com) and updated with blog posts providing general information and answers to FAQs during the applications process. Both the website and the blog received high traffic following the announcement of the grants opening.

Just under 640 registrations of interest were received and 157 applications were received, 125 for community-based projects, and 32 for small interventions. Each application was acknowledged by email within one business day of receipt. Details from applications were entered into an Microsoft Excel spreadsheet that was used to keep track of the applications during the assessment process and subsequently for providing feedback to unsuccessful applicants and later for setting up of a database for the successful grantees.

The total funding sought was \$4.6m. Several of the proposals were seeking ongoing funding despite strict criteria not permitting this. WESNET noted that this may indicate a level of desperation for funding in the sector evidenced by the fact that services are willing to take a chance on using resources to develop proposals for funding even though they are likely to be ineligible.

Over a year later, WESNET continues to get requests from organisations seeking funding for domestic and family violence projects.

**Table 2 – Number of total applications received by State or Territory and grant type and amount sought**

STATE	Number of applications			Funding sought		
	Large	Small	Total	Large	Small	Total
ACT	7	2	9	\$262,284	\$4,000	\$266,284
NSW	39	14	53	\$1,308,856	\$33,440	\$1,342,296
NT	2		2	\$100,000		\$100,000
QLD	18	3	21	\$674,418	\$5,965	\$680,383
SA	13	3	16	\$448,805	\$14,931	\$463,736
TAS	8	5	13	\$310,171	\$14,312	\$324,483
VIC	25	6	31	\$1,060,751	\$27,327	\$1,088,078
WA	10	2	12	\$398,984	\$6,680	\$405,664
Grand Total	122	35	157	\$4,564,270	\$106,655	\$4,670,924

## Finding

1. There was significant demand for capacity building funding from both the domestic and family violence sector and 'allied' areas. WESNET received 157 applications seeking a total of \$4.6m. Only 22 projects could be funded from the \$0.5m allocated to the program. Organisations still regularly contact WESNET to see if further grant funding is available.

## Selection process

WESNET convened a grants assessment team (GAT) to read and assess all the applications against set selection criteria.

The Grants Assessment Team convened on several occasions by teleconference for a total of 10 and a half hours to select the successful applicants.

Each proposal was assessed against the selection criteria by each member of the GAT using an agreed scale prior to the teleconference process. The GAT were also asked to provide reasons for their overall assessment of each proposal. The GAT then convened a number of teleconferences and discussed each proposal, a consensus was agreed on the relative merits of each proposal and reasons provided. A standard list of "reason codes" evolved over the duration of the teleconferences and was shared amongst the GAT members to enable them to consistently assess all proposals. Reason codes were also developed with the knowledge that these would be used to provide constructive feedback to unsuccessful applicants at a later date.

Proposals were ranked and a final decision on the successful applicants was reached on the basis of their ranking and other factors such as obtaining a diversity of projects across different demographic, geographic and category of intervention.

## Successful grants

Twenty-two applications were selected for a total funding amount of \$494,137 (excl GST). These are listed in Table 3. Three of the projects were selected for additional top up funding of around \$2,000 (excl GST) each to bring the total funding allocated to \$500,137 (excl GST). The three small interventions selected were the ACT Chinese Women's Association (ACT), Carrie's Place (NSW) and the Central Domestic Violence Service (SA).

During the actual running of the projects, one project – [S0031] Breaking the Silence on Family Violence – identified that it had forgotten to cost staff time into their original proposal and sought top up funding. WESNET provided an additional \$2,442 (excl GST) from its own funding to assist the project. The total funding increased to \$10,000 (excl GST). WESNET would not normally have considered doing this, however after discussion, it was agreed that the project was too valuable to lose. This brought the total grant funding to \$502,609 (excl GST).

**Table 3 – Successful grants**

Code	Organisation	State	Project Title	Amount
L0009	Older Women's Network NSW Inc.	NSW	Pathways for Referral: Reducing Violence against Older Women	\$50,000
L0015	Women's Health Goulburn North East	VIC	Partner Rape-Know About It, Respond effectively, Prevent it: An educational DVD, for health professionals and community members	\$46,170
L0016	Aboriginal Culture and Resource Centre Inc (ACRC)	NSW	"Strong Women, Safe Communities"	\$24,499

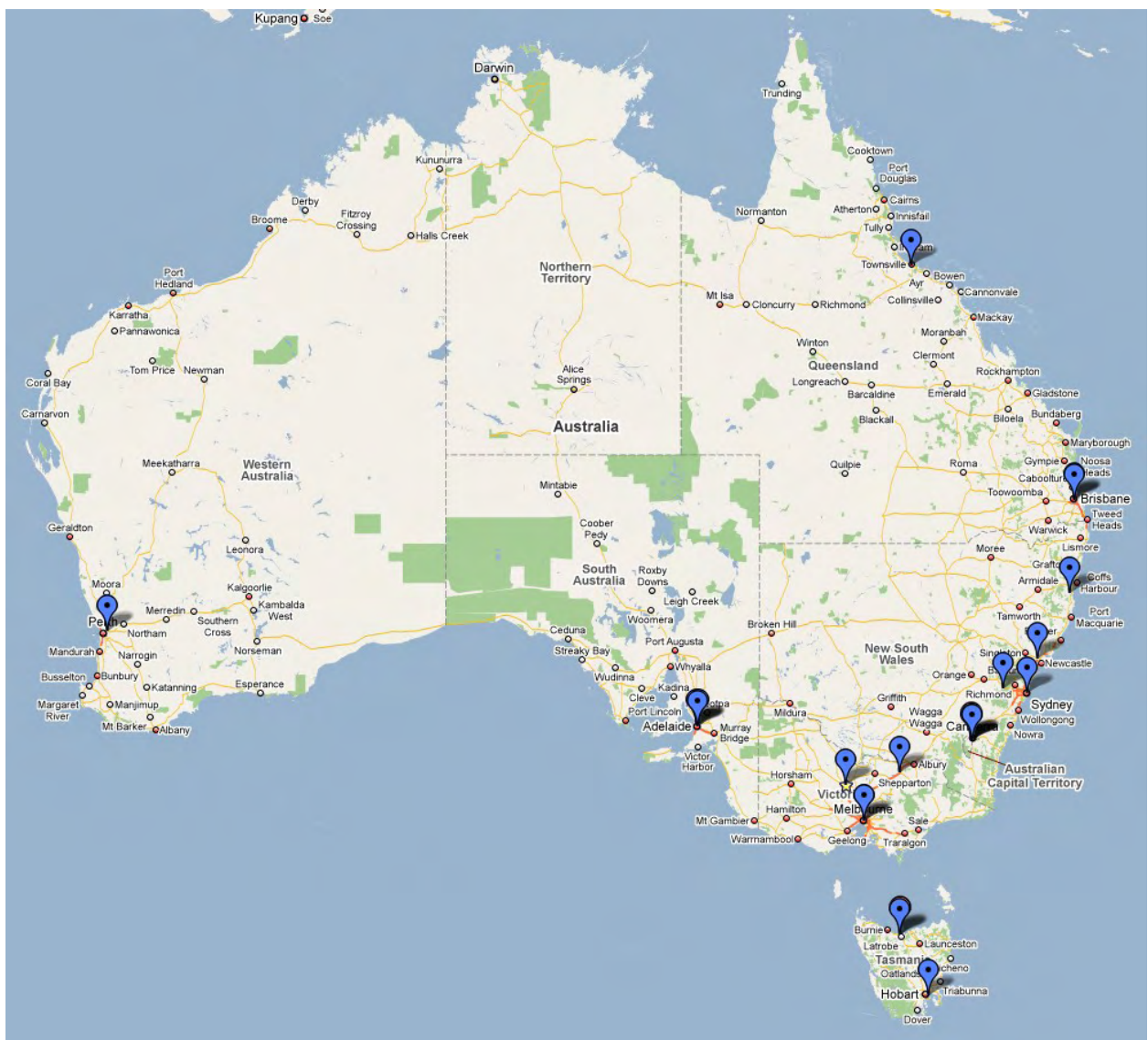
L0017	Immigrant Women's Domestic Violence Service (IWDVS)	VIC	Engaging Multicultural Faith and Community Leaders in the Early Prevention & Intervention of Violence against Women	\$44,139
L0031	North Queensland Combined Women's Services Inc (Also known as the Women's Centre)	QLD	Stopping Domestic Violence Billboard Project	\$43,486
L0036	Loddon Campaspe Integrated Family Violence Services Consortium (lead agency Emergency Accommodation Support Enterprise Inc)	VIC	Loddon Campaspe Family Violence Co-ordinated Community Response	\$50,000
L0046	Central Domestic Violence Service	SA	"Getting Talking" empowering Liberian women to address issues of domestic violence and promote healthy relationships.	\$20,660
L0054	Women's Centre for Health Matters	ACT	Access and respite for women with disabilities experiencing domestic violence by the ACT DV sector	\$40,835
L0056	Women's Legal Service	QLD	Domestic Violence Death Review Board Project, Stage 11	\$43,030
L0080	Aboriginal Family Support Services Inc.	SA	Children Growing Big and Strong	\$25,818
L0088	Domestic Violence Resource Centre (Victoria)	VIC	Leadership & Women With Disabilities: Capacity Building in Violence Prevention	\$37,444
L0101	Women's Legal Services Australia (sponsored by Women's Legal Service Victoria)	VIC	Keeping women safe: best practice and comparative legal approaches	\$44,128
S0001	Eastern Region Domestic Violence Services Network Inc	WA	Printing of Police Domestic Violence Handouts	\$1,680
S0006	ACT Chinese Women Association (Inc)	ACT	Intervention and Prevention of Domestic Violence for Australian Women and Children of Chinese Background	\$4,000 <sup>1</sup>
S0008	Central Domestic Violence Service Inc	SA	Creating Intentional Families: A resource to support mothers who have experienced domestic violence	\$4,000 <sup>1</sup>
S0009	MiiMi Mothers Aboriginal Corporation	NSW	Nambucca Valley Indigenous Women's Support Group	\$2,000
S0017	Carrie's Place Women's and Children's Service Inc	NSW	Choir of no more knocks	\$4,000 <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This was one of 3 projects provided with additional \$2,000 in funding.



S0022	Women's House Shelta	QLD	Domestic Violence and Child Protection Forum: exploring best practice from a feminist perspective	\$1,965
S0023	ACT Women and Prisons (ACTCOSS Auspicing)	ACT	Entering the Prison Kits	\$2,000
S0030	Clarendon Vale Neighbourhood Centre Inc	TAS	FUTI/POP - "Facing Up To It and Playing Our Part"	\$1,990
S0031	Huon Domestic Violence Service	TAS	Breaking the Silence on Family Violence	\$10,000
S0032	Malangenna Childcare Centre	TAS	Domestic Violence Support Package for Staff and Families	\$765
				\$502,609 <sup>3</sup>

**Figure 1 - Distribution of successful grant applications**



<sup>2</sup> WESNET agreed to provide an additional \$2,442 in funding to this project from its own funds.

<sup>3</sup> \$2,609 of this figure was absorbed by WESNET from the administrative portion of the project or its own funds.

## Unsuccessful grants

There were several applications that were highly worthy of funding but not able to be accommodated within the \$500,000.

There were other proposals that were ruled out of consideration relatively early in the process because they failed to demonstrate how the project would address maintaining the safety of participants, their partners (in the case of men's programs), or children (e.g. after participating in child-focused programs and then returning to violent situations).

A few proposals appeared to offer an opportunity for colluding with, or endorsing the thinking and behaviour of, perpetrators and were at odds with best practice in men's programs. The Grants Assessment Team ruled out these types of proposals as they did not demonstrate how they would maximise women's and children's safety or hold perpetrators accountable.

Two of these applicants sought feedback about their proposal. Upon hearing that the grants assessment panel advised them to include how they would address maintaining the safety of victims in their next proposal, one applicant replied that they had never even thought about that (safety of the victim) as a problem.

## Findings

2. There was evidence from some of the applications received that many services are struggling with programs for which they are unable to obtain a recurrent funding source. There is a great need to capacity build organisations as they are now doing more than just providing shelter and support.

The Grants Assessment Team in this process was highly vigilant to proposals that posed significant risk to the safety of participants whereas a less skilled assessment panel may not have been.

3. When seeking proposals, or funding programs, for early intervention and prevention of domestic and family violence:

- (a) it is important to have appropriately skilled and qualified members on the selection panel who can differentiate between proposals which maximise the safety of women and children and the accountability of perpetrators and those that do not;
- (b) applicants should be asked to set out how they would manage risk and safety.

The Committee noted that the addition of a prompt in any future application form or applicant guidelines asking applicants to set out how they would manage risk and safety could be a useful tool in making organisations think about the potential impact of their proposed intervention, especially those in the community setting, as well as alert selection panel members of a potential risk when an inadequate response is supplied by potential grantees.

## Announcement and feedback

Successful and unsuccessful applicants were notified by email on Wednesday 22 October 2008. Successful applicants were also contacted by their appointed contact officer (see below for a description of the role and activities of the contact officers).

Unsuccessful applicants were sent one of two emails. Applicants where the project had just missed out on funding because other projects were rated more highly were strongly urged to seek funding for their project from other sources. Other projects were just informed that they were not successful. Both categories of unsuccessful applicants were offered the opportunity to get feedback about their proposal.

Twenty-six of the 135 (or around 1 in 5) unsuccessful applicants sought feedback. Feedback ranged across a variety of issues. For example:

- o Nine of the applicants seeking feedback had proposals that were deemed suitable for funding, but missed out simply because there were other projects rated more highly suitable. They were

advised that their proposal had been rated suitable but that other projects had been more highly ranked and urged to seek funding elsewhere.

- Five of the applicants seeking feedback were seeking funding for an existing project (i.e they had run out of existing funding and needed more), had very high wage components to the project, or an unrealistic budget that could not be achieved in the timeframe. These applicants probably sought feedback because they were in high need of additional funding to maintain an existing project. This reinforces the earlier finding, that there is considerable demand for capacity building funding in the sector and funding to strengthen services capacity to do what they are already doing.
- Four applicants seeking feedback had proposals that did not clearly outline their philosophical underpinnings. This meant the GAT could not make an assessment as to whether the proposal was in line with current good practice in early intervention and prevention activities. During feedback discussions it became apparent that some unsuccessful applicants made an assumption that the selection panel would somehow intuit that they were operating in line with good practice, while others clearly were not up with more recent developments in violence intervention and prevention.
- Three applicants had proposals that were not trialling anything new or their application completely overlooked the existing relevant evidence base. In one case the idea was a good one but similar projects had been run in other parts of Australia, in another the proposal claimed there was no evidence about a particular issue, when considerable evidence existed. Again, evidence that having skilled and qualified people on the assessment panel was critical. WESNET was well placed to do this.

Responses from applicants that did seek feedback were very positive. They thanked the project coordinator for providing constructive and helpful advice and some expressed gratitude for the detailed and constructive nature of the feedback that is not generally provided from grant programs.

## Findings

4. The provision of feedback to unsuccessful applicants can be capacity building in itself. It can provide constructive advice to organisations about improving for future submissions or alerting them that certain aspects of their proposed program may not be in line with current best practice.
5. Having appropriately qualified panel members who are across policy and practice across Australia and internationally for grant selection can prevent 'reinventing the wheel' or funding interventions and activities that may be new to a region but have been tried and documented elsewhere.

## Contracting

Using the funding agreement templates prepared and checked by the pro-bono lawyers Gilbert + Tobin, the project coordinator prepared 22 funding agreements using the applications to populate various information fields, activity and financial schedules.

With the benefit of hindsight this process could have been streamlined further with a more prescriptive application form to ensure consistency in the type and quality of information provided by applicants. The process took longer than anticipated.

Another issue that arose was in relation to the GST. If there was to be another round of funding administered by WESNET in future years, WESNET will seek a special ruling from the Tax Commissioner to better manage GST cash flows.

## Management and support for projects underway

WESNET contracted a project coordinator, Karen Bentley, to manage the day-to-day operations of the project. The project coordinator kept a database of all the projects, and was available to assist the grantees with any administrative or contract related questions as they arose.

In addition, each grantee was assigned a Jurisdictional Contact Officer (JCO). The role of Jurisdictional Contact Officers within the Capacity Building Grants project was to:

- make contact with successful applicants and provide information about JCO role for life of project
- support successful applicants carry out their projects
- act as liaison point between successful applicants and the Project Management Committee (PMC) and the Project coordinator
- undertake (subtle) monitoring of projects progress and provide early warning to project coordinator if required.

The JCOs contacted their grantees regularly throughout the duration of the projects. In some cases the JCOs were instrumental in assisting with issues that arose during the projects, for example in the **Intervention and Prevention of Domestic Violence for Australian Women and Children of Chinese Background** discussed later in this report.

After the completion of the project, the grantees were surveyed about their thoughts on the administration of the program. The following is a selection of some of the comments received in relation to the administration of the program.

### Quotes from the feedback survey on administration

*"I found the support from the Project Coordinator to be excellent. She responded quickly and constructively to all my emails through the project, and was very encouraging throughout. The progress reports were clear and easy to complete. Thank you!"*

*"The management of the funding has been great- prompt and efficient.[sic]"*

*"The project officer has been available for support and assistance as required. There has also been a degree of flexibility in managing the project which has been really useful."*

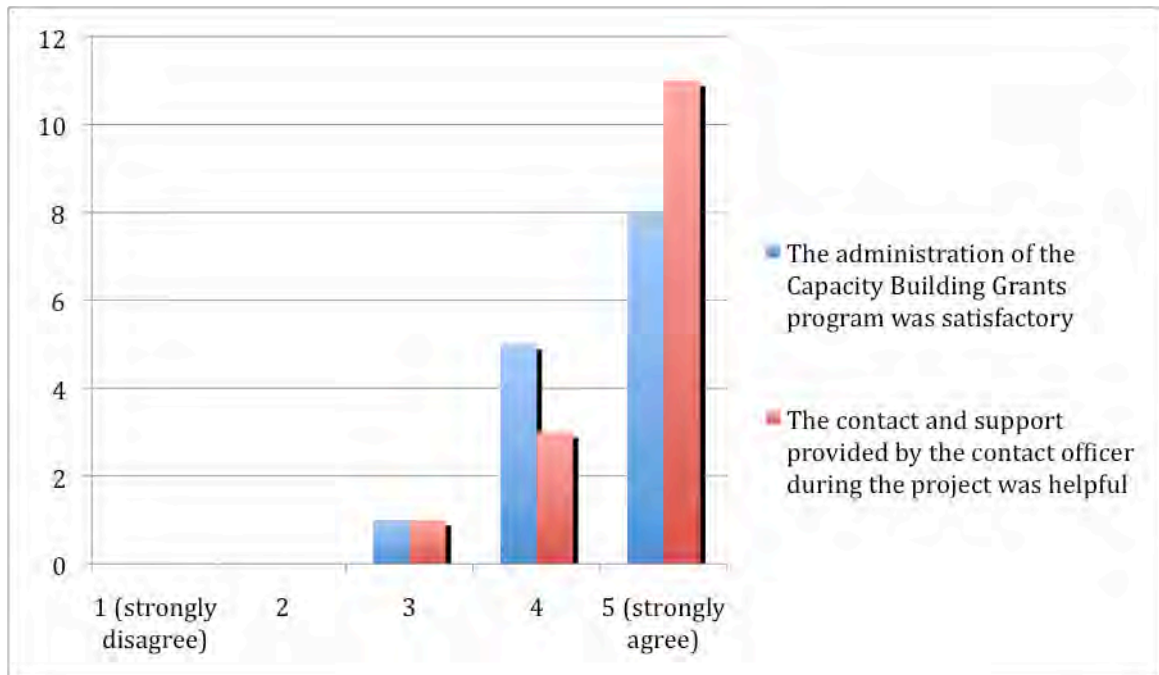
*"All positive! It was fabulous to be able to develop and run a program to support women experiencing domestic violence and have a feminist organisation as the funding body!!"*

*"It was great working with WESNET. All queries and correspondence was addressed very promptly . Received good support from the Grant Manager as well as contact officer ."*

*"Thanks for the grant and every WESNET staff's help[sic], specially [my contact officer]. "*

*"I found our contact people very approachable and responsive, thank you. It was a very good experience. Thanks for the opportunity to do a really interesting grass roots community development project."*

**Figure 2 - Feedback from grantees on the administration of the Capacity Building Grants project**



*"We were very appreciative and grateful for the funding and the opportunity it provided for us to expand the knowledge, understanding and awareness of the impacts, causes and healing in relation to Family Violence for our staff and community."*

*"Everything went well. Thank you for recognising that this is an important area in need of funding."*

*"This grant has been extremely useful in progressing a project that when implemented effectively, will reduce deaths from domestic violence. WESNET was offering this grant when there appeared to be no other sources of funding available."*

## Final reporting and acquittal by projects

By June 2009, all 22 projects were basically finished, but there were a few projects where timing issues meant that activities were undertaken after 30 June in order to ensure practical outcomes.

A recurring theme captured both in general communication with the projects and in their final report was the short amount of time available to conduct the project and the problem of the "Christmas" slow down. The short time frames allowed for the project were particularly difficult for some of the Indigenous projects, for example the **"Strong Women, Safe Communities"** project, but others also reported problems.

*"A key problem during the project related to time both in terms of the delay in the start time and in the shortness of the funded period. Neither of these problems may have been associated with the administrations of the Grant but good to be aware of for future projects."*

*Anonymous respondent to post-grant survey on administration*

We did receive one negative piece of feedback from one grant recipient, which stated:

*"The evaluation process was excessive for a grant of this size relative to other acquittal processes."*

However, this particular grantee provided a 16 page final report and had submitted a 15 page, densely written submission in the first instance. If WESNET ran another grant project it would make it very clear that such long responses are not required and indeed are a waste of human resources. WESNET was attempting to simplify the reporting requirements and to make them proportional to the size of the grant. Other grantees did seem to understand that the reporting requirements were not designed to be onerous.

*“All very simple and straightforward with realistic reporting requirements. ”*

Anecdotally, members of WESNET report their services do not usually bother applying for small grants because the administrative overheads resulting from the associated reporting requirements make the projects run at a significant loss. In the survey of the administration of the projects many participants noted that the reporting requirements for the smaller grants in this instance was not overly problematic.

*“...the lack of 'red tape' was generally refreshing, and was great for a small agency with only a small grant. Thank you.”*

*‘...Further WESNET have understood that services are doing these projects in amongst a lot of other work and I have therefore had the sense that they have worked to ensure that the admin and reporting requirements have been as streamlined and minimal as possible which has been fantastic”*

*Anonymous respondents to the post-grant survey on administration*

## Findings

6. Generally the grants program proceeded smoothly with no compliance failures. The following issues were noted:
  - (a) Many grantees found the short timeframe provided to complete their projects was problematic. By the time the grants were selected and contracted and then time was set aside at the end of the project to enable WESNET to meet its reporting obligations, the projects had around 7 months to complete the projects, including over the holiday period, which caused delays in some instances.
  - (b) Events beyond the control of grantees affected the progress of some projects, for example the Sudan crisis, the collapse of an airline in outback NSW/Qld and the Victorian bushfires.
  - (c) Early intervention and prevention programs can often lead to disclosures from either participants or employees about experiences of violence. It is important that projects are managed by or have ready access to appropriately qualified expertise to provide skilled risk assessment, management, support and referral if needed.

## Section 2. - Program outputs and outcomes

In the funding agreement between the Office for Women and WESNET information on various outputs and outcomes were specified.

WESNET was to record:

- changes in the capacity/ability of domestic and family violence support services to better respond to clients due to grant funded projects, and/or support from WESNET during the activity. This would include:
  - Improvements noted by services
  - Nature of improvements
  - Data on changes to service delivery capacity
  - Data on change to systems of structural capacity
  - Other outcomes
- data on changes in service users accessing services/projects as a result of grant funding
- number of clients/participants\*
- demographic representation\*
- length of access\*
- quality/quantity of service provision\*
- Changes in referrals/access points\*

This evaluation has been able to capture general findings about some of these issues and these have been incorporated into the discussion below. Specific data on some of the issues (highlighted with an asterisk above) have been much harder to quantify due to the nature of the projects funded. The type of data to be collected is not very easy to quantify and generally does not conform with activities undertaken for early intervention and prevention. Many of the indicators were very service-focussed when the activities undertaken by many of the projects were not of a service delivery nature.

WESNET suggests that other indicators may be more appropriate for measuring early intervention and prevention activities, such as:

- evidence of women from marginalised groups participating in activities – particularly women who may associate domestic and family violence with shame.
- Changes in attitudes, for example raised awareness of their legal/human rights, an increased understanding of the nature of domestic and family violence and that it is never the fault of the victim, and an understanding that perpetrators should be held accountable for their violence and abuse
- Timeliness of access rather than length of access
- Evidence of meaningful engagement instead of quality/quantity of direct service provision. Indicators about “engagement with” instead of “participation in” a service.
- Access to information, such as courts and police.
- Evidence of pathways rather than referrals. Including timeliness along pathway as well as new pathways.

Many other valuable and useful findings have come from the projects and are discussed in this section of the evaluation.

## Finding

7. WESNET suggests that indicators for measuring early intervention and prevention activities, should be less focussed on service delivery and could focus on measures such as the numbers of participants, changes in attitudes, timeliness of access to services and qualitative information such as meaningful engagement across sectors and access to information.

The goals and objectives of the project were as follows:

- A. Harness the practice wisdom of the domestic and family violence sector and support them to carry out and/or document innovative and creative ideas for early intervention and prevention activities.
- B. Support other community-based organisations to identify opportunities and measures to undertake strategic intervention on domestic and family violence within an early intervention/preventative framework.
- C. Build community capacity to reject and respond to domestic and family violence.
- D. Focus on prevention and early intervention with at-risk communities and populations, reducing risk, building resilience and protective factors, and building capacity of communities to address and solve their problems.
- E. Foster collaboration between local agencies in the prevention of domestic and family violence, including through mentoring, protocol development, and cross-sector training opportunities. The agencies could include refuges and shelters and other domestic and family violence services, SAAP services, police, the legal system, health workers, child protection, education, childcare workers, and others.

A discussion of how the projects met or worked towards each of these is covered in the following sections.

### A. Harnessing the practice wisdom of the domestic and family violence sector

This objective was designed to encourage services from the domestic and family violence sector to put in proposals that might assist with documenting new or previously unrecorded early intervention and prevention activities.

The domestic and family violence sector is strongly focused on delivering services to clients in need. This often means that there is neither the time nor spare resources for services to document or capture innovative practice wisdom or new and innovative prevention or early intervention activities. This project specifically offered funding for services that might want to document a particular practice in place in their organisation, or where they have expertise in a particular facet of early intervention and prevention work and would like to share this with others.

Over a dozen of the projects funded specifically met this objective.

Some services captured and shared their in-house knowledge:

- o The **Pathways for Referral: Reducing Violence against Older Women** project built on the Older Women's Network's considerable expertise and knowledge in the area of violence against older women. From their recently completed mapping project, OWN NSW found that studies report a low screening rate for violence against older women by GPs, even though the health system is a major source of support for older women, and domestic and family violence is a critical risk factor for women.

With their grant OWN undertook a project to develop partnerships between the aged, health and domestic violence sectors in three trial sites. A model was trialed for engaging General Practices in the early identification of the health impacts of family violence on older women and for establishing an effective referral pathway to a specialist domestic violence service. By the end of the project, ongoing collaborative agreements were reached among three agencies at the sites of



Canterbury, Campbelltown, and Nowra. Ultimately this project has identified a nationally replicable model that could work across Australia to assist the growing numbers of older women who are experiencing violence in their home.

Another tangible output from this project was the preparation of a literature review document which can be used as a resource. OWN also made several recommendations to WESNET for future action. As a result of these recommendations, WESNET has now instituted an Older Women's representative on their Committee in addition to the Indigenous and Immigrant, Refugee and non-English speaking background ones. There will be an ongoing relationship between OWN and WESNET to progress the recommendations of the report.

- **Access and respite for women with disabilities experiencing domestic violence by the ACT DV sector** used practice and knowledge from both the domestic violence and disability sector to develop best practice. The consultations undertaken for the report and the research and literature review on domestic and family violence and women with disabilities confirmed that women with disabilities continue to experience both high levels of domestic and family violence and to have high levels of unmet needs in terms of access to domestic violence, crisis and homelessness services. The project resulted in the report "*Women with Disabilities Accessing Crisis Services*" which includes good practice principles for improving access for women with disabilities to domestic violence services in the ACT. This can be used as a resource by the sector.

Some brought expertise in from outside to build their capacity:

- The **Loddon Campaspe Family Violence Co-ordinated Community Response** project brought in Graham Barnes (from the Battered Women's Justice Project Minneapolis USA) an international expert closely associated with the Duluth Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP) to conduct a two day workshop with follow up support for over 70 participants from various agencies across the central Victorian sub-region of Loddon Campaspe. The workshop, which uses the Duluth approach, assisted the group to assess where they were currently situated in developing a Co-ordinated Community Response (CCR) and outline the system steps necessary to reach full implementation. The development of a Co-ordinated Community Response is identified as a necessary step to be able to undertake System Safety Audits to ensure victim safety and perpetrator accountability.
- The project **Partner Rape-Know About It, Respond effectively, Prevent it: An educational DVD, for health professionals and community members**, brought together a range of appropriate experts to speak in the film and engage with the various target audiences. The project team was able to find experts that not only would be able to successfully engage their target audience but were also sending the *right* messages and not promulgating myths.

Others used the contributions and stories of women:

- In the project **Partner Rape-Know About It, Respond effectively, Prevent it: An educational DVD, for health professionals and community members**, the stories of women survivors and the experience of sector were used in developing an educational DVD that will build community capacity to reject and respond effectively to the little known or discussed issue of partner rape.

*The professionals and the women who appear in the DVD give the actual words that people need to say to help women, and, most importantly, impart the self-evident truth that women have a right to live safely and men have a legal obligation to stop raping women.*

*Women's Centre for Health Matters final report to WESNET*

- The **Stopping Domestic Violence Billboard Project** used the experience of the domestic violence sector and service users to get their project off the ground and to workshop the anti-violence messages that would appear on Billboards in the Townsville region.
- The **Access and respite for women with disabilities experiencing domestic violence by the ACT DV sector** project involved women with disabilities directly in their project as accessibility auditors and showed that the "lived experience" of a woman with a disability is an

excellent resource for services – ‘nothing about us without us’ - and changed the thinking of the services about the need to identify opportunities to consider how they could include women with disabilities in providing input to improving their services.

- The **Breaking the Silence on Family Violence** project developed community radio scripts using real stories from real people to reach a small rural community in Tasmania, where “radio listening by all family members is a rural institution”.
- The **Creating Intentional Families** project developed a manual which was and can be used in a 10 week parenting course that addresses what mothers can do at different developmental stages to respond to children’s developmental needs and promote peaceful parenting after domestic violence. The material was developed as the first group progressed and was compiled week by week for the mothers by the mothers.
- The **Choir of no more knocks** is a group of women who have experienced some form(s) of domestic violence in their lives. Much of their repertoire are songs that carry an anti-violence message &/or a pro human rights/social justice message. Between songs, women who have experienced domestic violence give audiences insight into their own experiences through narratives.
- In **“Getting Talking” empowering Liberian women to address issues of domestic violence and promote healthy relationships**, the women and the leaders of the community shared their perspectives around domestic violence, why it is an issue for their community, what it looks like in their community and how they thought the local domestic and family violence service could support them to further develop capacity to respond to and reject domestic violence.

*The knowledge gain for Central Domestic Violence Service had been significant. We have learnt about the importance of connecting with women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in a way which is culturally appropriate, rather than expecting that these women will fit a western model of service delivery.*

*Central Domestic Violence Service Final Report to WESNET*

The emerging theme that links all of these domestic and family violence sector-run projects was that they had capacity building projects ready to go when they applied for funds. The organisations had identified areas where (and how) they needed to build capacity and they just needed to gather funds to get the projects into operation.

Australia is at the forefront of significant policy and legislative changes related to domestic and family violence. This constantly invokes the need for capacity building for both specialist and non-specialist services to keep up with the emerging policies and practices. Although much of this can be considered to be the core business of services, many organisations still struggle to find sufficient funding to be able to fully understand new legislative changes, processes, pathways, services and demand. Services need capacity and opportunity to skill up and then they need opportunity and capacity to engage and provide accessible and appropriate information to the women. An example, has been the recent and controversial Family Law changes which are now under review. These changes have been a major issue affecting women and children separating because of domestic and family violence and go to the crux of their safety, wellbeing and housing stability. The sector does need to keep up with the changes which have been rolled out under the Shared Parenting legislation and the use of Family Relationship Services. Three of the projects funded specifically focused on family law changes, one on child protection, one on death reviews, and another on sharing knowledge and practice across states and territories and commonwealth.

- **Keeping women safe: best practice and comparative legal approaches** brought together 120 delegates for a two day workshop, from across Australia, from a variety of different professions (e.g. family violence support workers, magistrates and family court staff, Coroners, social workers, government, academics, lawyers and barristers, refuge workers, parliamentarians, legal educators). A wide range of issues were discussed but at least 3 sessions focussed on family law, including the gaps in the system, the overlap between child protection and family law legal frameworks.

- **Domestic Violence Death Review Board Project, Stage 2** which highlighted the risks inherent for women and children that have left violent relationships but are in the process of negotiating parenting and contact arrangements. It is well recognised that ‘leaving’ a relationship does not mean ‘leaving’ the violence and many deaths of women and children have occurred post separation.
- **Domestic Violence and Child Protection Forum:** brought domestic violence workers together to explore the intersection of domestic violence and child protection issues, the information gathered from the forum informed the development of a discussion paper.

## Findings

8. The grants gave several organisations the opportunity to document their own practice wisdom, and resulting in a tangible document for others in the sector to use.
9. A familiar theme in many of these domestic and family violence sector-run projects was that they had capacity building projects ready to go when they applied for funds. The organisations had identified areas where they needed to build capacity and just needed to gather funds to get the projects into operation.
10. Several of the projects confirmed for WESNET that the use of women’s own stories and experiences of violence adds a human element to early intervention and prevention activities that extends well beyond the selected target audience. Women’s narratives can profoundly affect the work-practices of workers in the sector and be very empowering to the individual women telling their stories.

## B. Supporting other community-based organisations to identify opportunities and measures to undertake strategic intervention on domestic and family violence within an early intervention/ preventative framework.

Women experiencing violence often need and use the services of a variety of organisations. The purpose of this objective was to engage some of those other community-based organisations (sitting outside the specialist domestic and family violence sector) to undertake projects around early intervention and prevention of domestic and family violence.

The **Children Growing Big and Strong** project run by Aboriginal Family Support Services (AFSS) conducted workshops for staff providing direct service delivery to Indigenous children across alternative care, family and community violence, policing, child care, crisis accommodation, gambling, primary health services, legal rights, statutory child protection, family preservation, teaching, school holiday programs and youth work in Port Augusta and Coober Pedy, South Australia. Since the workshops some participants have reported they have profoundly changed their professional interaction with children and families in and after family and community violence situations. For example a police participant reported using the skills learned in her interaction with children when attending domestic and community violence call outs.

The **Intervention and Prevention of Domestic Violence for Australian Women and Children of Chinese Background** project enabled the ACT Chinese Women’s Association to receive training and background from a local domestic violence service and ACT Legal Aid on issues relating to domestic and family violence. They then organised and ran various social events for their community and distributed pamphlets from the domestic violence service and other organisations.

Both of these projects illustrated the benefit of having a domestic and family violence expert involved in a project underway in an allied service.

- In the Children Growing Big and Strong Project, AFSS and their domestic violence expert Professor Judy Atkinson identified in the planning stages of the project that their original idea of

holding workshops for affected children raised significant safety issues. The project was then changed to target staff working with children affected by violence.

- At the proposal assessment stage, the Grants Assessment Team, identified that the ACT Chinese Women's association could benefit from being linked to a local domestic and family violence service to assist them with getting the right messages about domestic and family violence to the Chinese community, and more importantly to help the project team manage disclosures from women participating in the events.

The **Access and respite for women with disabilities experiencing domestic violence by the ACT DV sector Showcase** managed to actively inform the domestic violence-specific services in the ACT on how better to deliver their services to women with disabilities.

*"The project highlighted for the sector 'a recognition of how invisible Women with Disabilities can become in our work' and raised issues that the services had never considered about basic accessibility and the need to consider more than just physical access."*

*(Women's Centre for Health Matters Final Report)*

Two of the projects that focused on assisting Indigenous women potentially experiencing domestic and family violence used community activities as a means to build community and create a safe space to start discussions about getting assistance or help with domestic and family violence. The gatherings organised for the women were designed to not draw the attention of perpetrators to their actual purpose.

- The **"Strong Women, Safe Communities"** project conducted in the Blue Mountains, NSW, was run by the Aboriginal Culture and Resource Centre. They worked closely with local services to assist Aboriginal women and children affected by family violence to learn about where to get help and how to access services. Despite struggling with the short time frames imposed upon the project, they reported that the project strengthened relationships and connections between Elders, women, children and services.
- The **Nambucca Valley Indigenous Women's Support Group** project was awarded grant funding to bring women together through regular sewing and craft workshops as a means of creating a safe environment to initiate discussion focused on developing mutual support amongst Indigenous women who have been victims of domestic and family violence. The project was highly cost effective, provided a safe environment for women to gather and build a community. Bowraville has been identified as one of the top five disadvantaged communities in NSW.

Both projects were excellent examples of community-based organisations that had both the essential expertise in working with domestic and family violence and existing links with or ability to make links with their target audience. This meant the projects were safe as well as effective. This was in contrast to some of the proposals that were not funded because they had not taken safety issues into consideration. These projects reinforced the importance of knowledge and expertise about domestic and family violence being a crucial element to designing and implementing successful early intervention and prevention activities.

Two of the projects used their grant funds to purchase or provide training for their community. These two projects were good examples of how small amounts can be effective in early intervention and prevention activities.

- In the **FUTI/POP - "Facing Up To It and Playing Our Part"** the Clarendon Vale Neighbourhood Centre in Tasmania, provided first contact training to 14 workers in organisations based within and outside the Clarence Plains community. The group consisted of workers from schools, Child and Family Services, local council, child carers and volunteers & workers from Neighbourhood Centres. The training is primarily focussed on increasing the knowledge base of workers and community members in domestic and family violence and how to recognise signs of abuse and respond appropriately.
- The smallest of the grants funded was to the Malangenna Childcare centre and was used to purchase a **Domestic Violence Support Package for Staff and Families**. While the outlay was small at \$764 the childcare centre stated that they would not have been able to purchase the kit without the external funding. The project reported that "safe from the start tool kit" enabled staff

to use the tools provided and to include innovative and creative ideas into the programs at all developmental levels to support such topics as separation, feelings, physical abuse, bullying, in a sensitive manner.

The **Printing of Police Domestic Violence Handouts** project managed by the Eastern Region Domestic Violence services network in Western Australia developed handouts for police to distribute when attending incidents. It has reportedly enabled both victims and perpetrators of violence to directly access information on how they can obtain support in relation to domestic and family violence and also increased the knowledge of police officers attending incidents as well as providing them with tools to encourage community members to access support as early as possible.

The **Entering the Prison Kits** project, and some of the other projects funded under the Small Intervention Projects, such as **Domestic Violence Support Package for Staff and Families** and **FUTI/POP - "Facing Up To It and Playing Our Part"** showed that a lot can be achieved with small grants and that there is a willingness amongst organisations to share scarce resources.

## Findings

11. Community-based organisations can benefit greatly from accessing the advice or participation of a domestic and family violence "expert". Potential benefits can include:
  - (a) ensuring the project to be undertaken focuses appropriately on the safety of women and children;
  - (b) ensuring that the right messages about domestic and family violence are disseminated, and that myths are not inadvertently promulgated;
  - (c) staff in the community-based organisations are prepared for and have appropriate skills to manage disclosures from participants.
12. Some of the more successful projects were those carried out by non-sector organisations that were able to disguise early intervention and prevention activities as other activities. This enabled women experiencing violence to gain information and advice and support without 'alerting' their partners. However, it is crucial that activities of this nature are underpinned by a good understanding of domestic and family violence, and if this expertise is not available in house, it should be obtained from specialist domestic and family violence services before undertaking similar activities.
13. There were some very good outcomes from the projects funded in the under \$10,000 category, demonstrating that much can be achieved on a very small budget in local communities. The administration and reporting requirements of smaller amounts of funding needs to be proportional so community organisations are actually willing to seek smaller grants.

## C. Building community capacity to reject and respond to domestic and family violence.

By its very nature, domestic and family violence is a hidden issue in our society. Weeks and Oberin (2004) noted that "Among the important concerns of services about women's experience of violence has been the lack of funded capacity of services to reach out to women sufficiently early. Services have also been concerned about not always reaching those groups of women for whom seeking help is deep 'shame'."

Under this objective, WESNET sought projects from organisations seeking to build community capacity to reject and respond to family violence, stimulate change in community attitudes to the unacceptability of violence against women, and reach women who wouldn't usually access specialist services. Another related objective was around providing capacity for the non-specialist services, as well as the domestic and family violence specific services, to increase the capacity and expertise they have around early intervention activities.

The following highlights some of the projects that worked towards this objective.

The **Loddon Campaspe Family Violence co-ordinated Community Response** brought together over 70 participants from a range of agencies in the Loddon Campaspe sub-region in Central Victoria to work together on a co-ordinated community response to domestic and family violence. The group worked on understanding of how a community response could work, as well as enabling all of the participants to ensure they were speaking the same language around the underlying principles of safety and accountability. The agencies and organisations varied from specific Domestic/Family Violence services, men's behaviour change services, through court and police, sexual assault as well as generalist women's health services and community health services. All were committed to "delivering" the same message about domestic and family violence to victims and men who use violence towards family members. This sends the strongest possible system message to the community about the unacceptability of domestic and family violence. The workshop also demonstrated visually how victims and perpetrators of domestic and family violence can fall between the gaps of a non-integrated community response. It highlighted how a coordinated community response is more likely to prevent harm and death, and if set up in the right way, be tested for safety.

The **Domestic Violence Death Review Board Project (Stage 2)** brought the community together and gave some hope to participants that there could be positive ways of prevention of death through death reviews when at times some situations seem hopeless. Domestic violence death reviews look at trends, risk factors, gaps in service delivery, legal and social systems responses and make recommendations for changes to prevent deaths. The community also participated in a campaign sending postcards, lobbying, and raising funds. By bringing the community together to strive for positive gain, the project acted as a model for other community action and also raised the issue in the media. The project arguably has contributed to the potential introduction of Death Reviews in Queensland and other States are following.

The **Access and respite for women with disabilities experiencing domestic violence by the ACT DV sector** project focused on working with a majority of the domestic violence s Services in the ACT and by the end of the project it was reported that

"Women with disabilities in the ACT who are experiencing domestic violence are 'back on the agenda for these services, and will benefit over time through improved service access when seeking support from the six crisis domestic violence accommodation services and three counselling services in the ACT, or through the disability organisations they might access first for assistance."

**Pathways for Referral: Reducing Violence against Older Women** – produced over 400 FAQ kits for GPs and provided GP training at two sites. Ongoing follow-up was also organised to maintain use of kits.

The **"Getting Talking" empowering Liberian women to address issues of domestic violence and promote healthy relationships** project enabled around 50 Liberian women to have access to information about domestic violence and healthy and unhealthy relationships. Further the project has also given the Liberian community, and importantly the Elders in that community, information about where they can access support around these issues, all of which will assist them in supporting families in their community affected by domestic and family violence.

The **Leadership & Women With Disabilities: Capacity Building in Violence Prevention** project enhanced the capacity of individual women with disabilities to have a voice in community action against domestic and family violence by seeking and working with women who live with a personal experience of disability and are interested in enhancing their existing skills and abilities in participating in violence prevention.

**Breaking the Silence on Family Violence** involved the local community in developing anti-domestic and family violence messages. It was reported that the radio programs and their development, gave the wider community a better understanding of what the local domestic violence service did as well understanding that "everyone in communities has a vested interest in violence prevention because everyone is affected".

The objective of the **Engaging Multicultural Faith and Community Leaders in the Early Prevention & Intervention of Violence against Women Change of community attitude** project, managed by the Immigrant Women's Domestic Violence Service of Victoria, was to raise community awareness about domestic and family violence in four CALD communities – Chinese, Vietnamese, Sudanese, and Arabic-speaking communities. The project increased awareness of faith and community leaders about early prevention and intervention by training them on an extensive 12-hour curriculum on different aspects of family violence. The project provided leaders with knowledge and tools to change previously accepted behaviours and norms within their specific community as well as assisting in early intervention by providing them with skills for intervention in family violence situations to ensure victim safety and to hold perpetrators accountable.

This project also illustrated that sometimes involving the target group in determining how grant funding will be spent is an effective way to engage the target groups in the first place. The project team running the project invested hours of time in trying to engage the faith leaders from the four target communities selected. This was particularly problematic for some of the groups. It was not until the team took the unusual (for the domestic and family violence sector) step of inviting the leaders to have some say in how the grant funds would be spent, that they managed to bring all the faith leader groups on board. Ultimately this enabled events to occur and for the issue of domestic and family violence to be discussed in the target communities with both the presence of the leaders and the domestic and family violence experts.

**The Stopping Domestic Violence Billboard Project** estimates that the messages on their billboards are being communicated to 31, 492 drivers per day plus their passengers and that this will result in well over 11,494,580 communications being made in a year. This is many times the total population of North Queensland, so multiple exposures to the message can be assumed. Being exposed to a message multiple times over time, increases the retention rate of the message, and increases the chance of a response and then the likelihood of behavioural and attitudinal change may increase. Furthermore the project is very easy to replicate and very cost effective at about \$4.08 cents for each 1000 exposures, which is much cheaper than newspaper and television advertising. Awareness levels from billboard advertising are also reported to be retained longer than for other media types.

*The billboard messages are designed to include the community in violence prevention, inviting each person to take part in stopping domestic violence.*

*North Queensland Combined Women's Services Inc in their final report to WESNET*

These five projects are excellent examples of Domestic/Family Violence Services which have identified particular gaps or needs affecting a marginalised group or community. They all had relationships with the existing community or knew how to potentially access and engage with them and they had projects "ready to go".

As well as raising community awareness through their performances, the **Choir of no more knocks** also had a more therapeutic aspect for the women singing in the choir. It was reported that the women formed strong bonds with each other and also with their audiences, breaking down the cycle of isolation that many women find themselves caught in, as a direct result of domestic and family violence. This project was a great example of how capacity building funding can operate on several levels simultaneously.

The **FUTI/POP - "Facing Up To It and Playing Our Part** first contact training for community and workers in the Clarence Plains region of Tasmania built strong links between community members, organisations and the domestic and family violence sector. The project reports that participants now have knowledge that enables them to take appropriate action when family violence is disclosed to them and they now have a new relationship with local workers that enables them to more easily discuss their concerns.

*"From discussions with participants they have reported feeling empowered to act and some have made notifications to child protection as a result of the training. The participants now recognise that the behaviour they were witnessing was not normal and acceptable and that something should be done."*

*Clarendon Vale Neighbourhood Centre, Final Report to WESNET*

## Findings

14. Capacity building projects often operate on more than one level. They not only build capacity and raise awareness in the target audience or the community, but also have a therapeutic or empowering impact for individuals.
15. Many organisations have projects ready to go and just need to obtain a source of funding in order to implement projects that focus on early intervention and prevention or known gaps in their service delivery in this area.

### D. A focus on prevention and early intervention with at-risk communities and populations, reducing risk, building resilience and protective factors, and building capacity of communities to address and solve their problems

The impact of domestic and family violence for women who are also members of an at-risk group or community was a particular focus for the grants project. Marginalisation can be experienced in many ways and the breadth of projects funded that met this objective illustrates this. The following table (Two projects highlighted the lack of awareness both in the general public and in services about the domestic and family violence experiences of women with disabilities.

- The **Access and respite for women with disabilities experiencing domestic violence by the ACT DV sector** project highlighted how the awareness of domestic violence services about the range of accessibility issues faced by women with disabilities can be enhanced by engaging with these women themselves.
- The **Leadership & Women With Disabilities: Capacity Building in Violence Prevention Women with disabilities at risk population** demonstrated that the way forward is based on the notion of encouraging and building the capacity of women with disabilities to be active participants rather than making them passive recipients of the early intervention and prevention agenda. The project also highlighted that:

*“There is a dearth of awareness and knowledge in Australia and overseas about the nature and prevalence of violence against women with disabilities. There is even less known about the help-seeking experiences of women with disabilities who have lived with violence, and the gaps in – and accessibility to – the relevant support services.*

*Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria, Final report to WESNET*

*Targeting women with intellectual disabilities as participants required an understanding of the additional barriers these women often face to accessing programs developed to educate and inform women. For one woman who lived in supported housing participation was contingent on the project worker’s willingness to liaise with a number of her support workers advocating her right to attend project activities.*

*Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria, Final report to WESNET*

The leadership project also highlighted another issue often faced by organisations when working with disadvantaged or marginalised groups. During this project, it became apparent that one woman with a disability who volunteered to undertake the mentoring to enhance her skills as an advocate had unstable mental health issues as a result of past abuse. The project team at the DVRC Victoria arranged for the woman to receive professional support. This type of disclosure happens often in domestic and family violence projects. In this case excluding the woman because of her current personal circumstances could have been very disempowering and made her existing situation much worse. Because of their experience, skills and knowledge, DVRC was able to handle this situation appropriately and in a strengths-based way by validating her experience and linking her into appropriate services.



Table 4) illustrates indicates that practically every project funded targeted a marginalised or at-risk group.

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**Table 4 - Summary of projects that targeted specific groups/communities at risk**

<b>Target Group</b>	<b>Projects where target group was main focus</b>	<b>Projects where target group was involved</b>
<b>Women with disabilities</b>	The Access and respite for women with disabilities experiencing domestic violence by the ACT DV sector  Leadership & Women With Disabilities: Capacity Building in Violence Prevention	Pathways for Referral: Reducing Violence against Older Women
<b>Indigenous women</b>	"Strong Women, Safe Communities"  Nambucca Valley Indigenous Women's Support Group	Partner Rape-Know About It, Respond effectively, Prevent it: An educational DVD, for health professionals and community members  Pathways for Referral: Reducing Violence against Older Women

**Age-related**

Children Growing Big and Strong Indigenous family violence  
 FUTI/POP - "Facing Up To It and Playing Our Part"  
 Breaking the Silence on Family Violence  
 Domestic Violence Support Package for Staff and Families training to identify and respond  
 Creating Intentional Families: A resource to support mothers who have experienced domestic violence  
 Domestic Violence and Child Protection Forum: exploring best practice from a feminist perspective  
 Pathways for Referral: Reducing Violence against Older Women

**Immigrant, Refugee and women from non-English speaking backgrounds**

Engaging Multicultural Faith and Community Leaders in the Early Prevention & Intervention of Violence against Women "Getting Talking" empowering Liberian women to address issues of domestic violence and promote healthy relationships. Identified new and emerging community of Liberian women.  
 Intervention and Prevention of Domestic Violence for Australian Women and Children of Chinese background

Pathways for Referral: Reducing Violence against Older Women  
 Partner Rape-Know About It, Respond effectively, Prevent it: An educational DVD, for health professionals and community members

**Regional rural and remote communities**

Loddon Campaspe Family Violence co-ordinated Community Response Stopping Domestic Violence Billboard Project  
 Breaking the Silence on Family Violence  
 Children Growing Big and Strong Indigenous family violence  
 FUTI/POP - "Facing Up To It and Playing Our Part"

Nambucca Valley Indigenous Women's Support Group

**Justice system**

Domestic Violence Death Review Board Project, Stage 2  
 Keeping women safe: best practice and comparative legal approaches  
 Entering the Prison Kits

Nambucca Valley Indigenous Women's Support Group  
 Loddon Campaspe Family Violence co-ordinated Community Response

**Pathways for Referral: Reducing Violence against Older Women** reinforced that violence is a problem for older women and that as the Australian population ages, we can expect an increase in reporting. More worryingly is that many women of this generation will not have the economic resources to afford a healthy and safe retirement. The Older Women's Network has highlighted the crucial role general practitioners can play in supporting older women experiencing violence.

The **Engaging Multicultural Faith and Community Leaders in the Early Prevention & Intervention of Violence against Women** had to get through some significant barriers with engaging their target audience before they successfully engaged them.

*"Due to denial that violence against women is an issue within their communities, majority of faith and community leaders didn't recognise the need and benefit of engagement with the project. The leaders perceived domestic violence as a "western" notion and did not believe that it existed in their communities. A lot of sensitisation around the issue of domestic and family violence was part of the recruitment process. Many leaders stated that they had very busy schedules and showed minimal interest in committing 12 hours to the training session. With constant meetings, outreach visits, phone calls and networking, the project was able to engage 72 faith and community leaders from the four identified communities."*

The Liberian community are a group that has experienced high levels of violence and abuse in their country of origin and in refugee camps and are isolated in a dominant culture in their new country – making them an at-risk population. The work that **“Getting Talking” empowering Liberian women to address issues of domestic violence and promote healthy relationships** has facilitated the community to build their resilience in addressing domestic violence and in developing a plan around how they want Central Domestic Violence Service (SA) to support them.

**Intervention and Prevention of Domestic Violence for Australian Women and Children of Chinese Background** highlighted the sense in their community that they now had somewhere to go if they experienced domestic and family violence.

*“[the] People [who] attended our activities are very happy to know our association has started this project, and that now they will have somewhere to go to and someone to talk to.*

*ACT Chinese Women’s Association final report to WESNET*

The **Entering the Prison Kits** project worked with women entering the prison system in the ACT. Research shows that this group is highly likely to have experienced domestic and family violence and/or sexual abuse, and then can become more practically and emotionally vulnerable to domestic and family violence whilst in prison and when leaving. The project provided women with kits containing information and practical items and encouraged them to build relationships with the ACT Women and Prison Group that offers support, mentoring and advocacy for incarcerated women. Regular and ongoing fortnightly meetings between the Women and Prison Group and incarcerated women are continuing.

When working with some at-risk communities it is important to consider and work with the inherent power structures in those communities, for example, the importance of working through Elders where they were significant to the group. This was true for all the Indigenous projects – especially the **Children Growing Big and Strong** project where Indigenous Elder involvement changed the target group, and **Nambucca Valley Indigenous Women’s Support Group** where Elder involvement was critical in a community experiencing serious crime ‘spikes’. Elders were also important in other communities, for example the Liberian community in **“Getting Talking” empowering Liberian women to address issues of domestic violence and promote healthy relationships**.

It was also interesting to note how important informal gatherings and the sharing of food featured in early intervention and prevention activities, especially where an organisation was trying to establish or foster relationships with a marginalised or disadvantaged group. For example [S0006] The **ACT Chinese Women’s Project: “Intervention and Prevention of Domestic Violence for Australian Women and Children of Chinese Background”** and **Aboriginal Culture and Resource Centre’s project: “Strong Women, Safe Communities”**

## Findings

16. Despite anecdotal evidence that it is difficult to locate and fund early intervention and prevention programs that successfully engage with at-risk and marginalised groups, WESNET had no difficulty. Nearly every project funded successfully targeted and engaged with an at-risk or marginalised group. And the grant projects demonstrated that many domestic and family violence services are right on top of identifying need and opportunity with these groups.
17. The number and range of projects clearly shows that the domestic and family violence sector can easily build capacity within the communities in which they operate with small and innovative projects.
18. The nature of the projects ranged widely. Some projects worked with a specific group not currently accessing services or information, where the message affecting specific individuals may have had a ripple out effect to their families and community. At the other end of the scale, there were projects that engaged all the refugees and undertook structural and lasting change about a certain marginalised and at risk group as a whole. Early intervention and prevention of domestic and family violence can and should take a variety of forms and work at multiple levels.

19. When working with some at-risk communities it is important to consider and work with the inherent power structures in those communities. For example, the importance of working through Elders where they were significant to the group.
20. Funding the provision of food and informal gatherings can be very cost effective and a good way to establish rapport with disadvantaged groups.

## E. Fostering collaboration between local agencies in the prevention of domestic and family violence

Current best practice shows the importance of integrated and coordinated services being integral to preventing women and children falling through the cracks. There is more likelihood of prevention occurring when the systems are working together with shared messages and shared responses.

To this end WESNET identified that an important objective of the grants project should be to fund projects that foster collaboration between local agencies, particularly where new relationships were to be formed or structural partnerships and linkages were proposed.

As mentioned earlier, the **Loddon Campaspe Family Violence Co-ordinated Community Response** in central Victoria used their capacity building funding to bring a leading international expert to assist them to with their Co-ordinated Community Response (CCR) model. The project notes in its final report that building a Coordinated Community Response takes time. There is no "one size fits all" approach that can be applied as each community is different and at different stages in its development. The groundwork takes a lot of time and commitment. They also found that shared understanding of language and concepts is crucial. Evaluations from the workshop indicated that many participating agencies now for the first time understood the importance of working together in an integrated and coordinated way to enhance the safety of women and children and enhance the accountability of perpetrators.

Women's Health Goulburn North East in regional Victoria engaged with several organisations while developing, interviewing and filming for the project **Partner Rape-Know About It, Respond effectively, Prevent it: An educational DVD, for health professionals and community members** and now provides a valuable resource on Partner Rape that can be used by a range of community and health professionals. It can be viewed as a whole or in relevant or staged sections.

The **"Strong Women, Safe Communities"** project run by the Aboriginal Culture and Resource Centre reported that they strengthened links with local services and now have a very strong and genuine partnership with the Blue Mountains Women's Health Centre.

The MiiMi Mothers Aboriginal Corporation which ran the **Nambucca Valley Indigenous Women's Support Group** project established ongoing links with a range of other local organisations in their area. The Bowraville AMS Mental Health Worker worked with the group each week, and they also had visits from counsellors from Interrelate and the local Magistrate and Women's refuge.

The ACT Chinese Women's Association built a brand new relationship with the local domestic and family violence service through their project **Intervention and Prevention of Domestic Violence for Australian Women and Children of Chinese Background**. This relationship continues beyond the grant.

In the criminal justice system, two projects worked at opposite ends of the spectrum. The **Printing of Police Domestic Violence Handouts** project improved the understanding of police attending domestic violence incidents, while the **Entering the Prison Kits** project established strong collaboration between the ACT Women and Prison Group, the ACT Women's Services Network, Human Rights Commission and the ACT Community Coalition on Corrections.

The childcare centre running the **Domestic Violence Support Package for Staff and Families** project made the resource they purchased with the project funding available to another long day care centre, vacation care and after school hours care, broadening the reach of the project.

The **Domestic Violence and Child Protection Forum: exploring best practice from a feminist perspective** project provided local agencies with the opportunity to network and discuss and articulate best practice related to the domestic violence/child protection nexus.

*“Participants provided feedback that the opportunity to actively share information had been useful in developing their understanding of issues at the nexus of domestic violence and child protection.”*

*Women’s House Shelta Final report to WESNET*

Two lead community agencies are now working together to further develop the initial resource begun through the **Creating Intentional Families** project. Community interest is very high in the project and should help many other women with parenting their children in the aftermath of domestic and family violence.

*The aim of this project is to reduce risk of further abuse, build resilience and protective factors for individual mother headed families and also to build community capacity to respond effectively to the impacts of domestic violence on parenting*

*Central Domestic Violence Service (SA) Final report to WESNET*

Several projects highlighted difficulties with cross-sector collaborations.

- The **Pathways for Referral: Reducing Violence against Older Women** project highlighted that it is not always easy to create successful cross-sector collaboration. The project team, in trying to engage with the medical profession, reported that there was variation in support and understanding between Divisions of General Practice that ranged from enthusiastic to resistant to simply evasive. As the Divisions generally operate as “gatekeepers” for any access to general practitioners in a region, the project team noted that there is scope for a more standardized position to be taken by the medical profession with respect to the health impacts of domestic and family violence.
- **Engaging Multicultural Faith and Community Leaders in the Early Prevention & Intervention of Violence against Women** experienced the practical difficulty in getting people together, faith leaders could only meet after hours but many of the speakers at the events (for example Men's family Violence Prevention Association, Victoria Police and Child Protection) could only meet during business hours.

Other projects reported that highly successful partnerships and collaborations were readily achieved:

- **Keeping women safe:** best practice and comparative legal approaches brought together many players and was useful in educating the sector, particularly in sharing useful knowledge about legal loopholes and prevention. The project brought a wide range of agencies and services within the sector together – service providers, women lawyers, magistrates, judges, department of justice, legal aid and the coroner.
- The Huon Domestic Violence Service that managed the **Breaking the Silence on Family Violence** project improved their networks throughout the local rural community they service, and formed strong partnerships with the local radio station Huon FM, the Huon Theatre Group and the Huon Youth Services. The services were also asked to join the peak local-regional community forum “Stronger Communities”.
- The **Domestic Violence Death Review Board Project** promoted collaboration and has built on sector cohesiveness.
- The **Access and respite for women with disabilities experiencing domestic violence by the ACT DV sector** project stated that they had “fostered a more unorthodox collaborative approach than is usual for projects responding to domestic and family violence – it was overseen and supported by 3 organisations from different specialties (the domestic violence/crisis counselling sector, the disability sector and the women’s health sector) which worked together to bring about change which would benefit all their stakeholders”.

- The **Stopping Domestic Violence Billboard Project** brought together many local agencies to work on the campaign building networks and fostering collaboration.
- **FUTI/POP - "Facing Up To It and Playing Our Part"** brought community members and organisations together and has built an ongoing collaboration that is seeking new sources of funding for other activities relating to domestic and family violence prevention such as running drama productions in the local schools.

## Findings

21. Coordinated Community Responses take time to establish and there is no “one size fits all” approach that can be applied as each community is different and at different stages in its development. It takes time and commitment, and a shared understanding of language and concepts across different agencies is crucial.
22. Collaboration can be highly mutually beneficial for services that are often resource and time poor as expertise and knowledge are shared but so are the financial and resource demands.

## Other findings

### Managing safety and providing support

Ensuring the safety of, or providing ongoing support to participants was another recurring issue affecting some projects.

The **Children Growing Big and Strong** project was originally going to conduct workshops with Indigenous children but during the planning stages of the project concerns were raised about how the children would be selected to participate, and more importantly how the children and accompanying adults would be provided with follow up support after the workshops if needed. In the end the workshops were targeted at workers from organisations providing services to children instead.

### Dealing with disclosures

A recurring theme across a few projects was having to manage unanticipated disclosures of domestic and family violence. There were projects, which despite being of a generally educative nature, resulted in disclosures from either participants or employees involved in the project. The fact the projects were run by or had close association with organisations with expertise in dealing with domestic and family violence meant that these disclosures were managed appropriately and safely, but reinforced the sector wisdom, that early intervention and prevention programs can often lead to disclosures and that it is important that projects are managed by or have ready access to appropriately qualified expertise to provide support and referral.

*Ethically those working in violence prevention need to have the capacity to identify and provide an appropriate response to any disclosures. Engaging in thinking, reading and talking about violence against women brought up emotions because of past and/or current experiences for some participants that then required a suitable response.*

*Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria, Final report to WESNET*

In the **Breaking the Silence on Family Violence** project, there were disclosures from participants in the radio broadcasts once they read the scripts. The project therefore had an immediate and tangible impact as well as one aimed more broadly at the general radio-listening community.

*As anticipated, the nature of the scripts were such that they could often resonate with and possibly be traumatic for the actors. The professional actors who assisted with the project were more comfortable reading the material that were the young people and the community volunteers. We spent time briefing and de-briefing the participants, and giving them information about our service and referral advice. .... As a service worker, I was pleased that we reached a wider and different range of community, and that we could assist them with follow up support.*

*A worker from the Huon Domestic Violence Service (Tasmania) Final report to WESNET*

During their project, the ACT Chinese Women Association (who ran the **Intervention and Prevention of Domestic Violence for Australian Women and Children of Chinese Background** project) were contacted by ACT Police and asked to visit a woman of Chinese background with limited English who had sought Police assistance but then “withdrawn”. WESNET learnt of this through the reporting process. The action by the ACT police appeared to be a one-off and did not appear to follow well-established protocols. It potentially placed both the woman and the volunteers from the ACT Chinese Women Association at considerable risk from the perpetrator. WESNET, through its ACT Jurisdiction Contact Officer, provided support to the ACT Chinese Women Association to set up appropriate processes for future events and to ensure they know about the standard protocols the ACT police usually have in place with respect to responding to domestic and family violence incidents.

## Other capacity building

By participating in the projects funded several organisations noted that they increased their own capacity in unexpected ways. For example:

- Women’s Legal Service Victoria learned how to stage events through managing the **Keeping women safe: best practice and comparative legal approaches** project.
- Women’s Health Goulburn North East learned how to produce a film and DVD during their project: **Partner Rape-Know About It, Respond effectively, Prevent it: An educational DVD, for health professionals and community members**