



Australian Government

Attorney-General's Department

Report of the
FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION LEGAL SERVICES
CONFERENCE

Cairns

29, 30 and 31 October 2006

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Executive summary

The Attorney-General's Department (the Department) hosted the annual national Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Conference on 29, 30 and 31 October 2006. The Department funds 26 Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLS) units, located predominately in remote and rural areas of high need. The expansion of the program from 13 to 26 units represents a \$22.7 million commitment by the Australian Government over the past four years.

FVPLS units provide services to Indigenous people who are victims of, or who are at immediate risk of, family violence and/or sexual assault. Services provided by the units include legal assistance, crisis counselling, court support, information, referrals, outreach services and community education.

The Australian Government continues to increase funding for Indigenous justice initiatives. A further \$23.6 million has been injected to expand the number of FVPLS units from 26 to 31. The five new FVPLS units will be established in the Broken Hill, Broome, Port Lincoln and Tennant Creek Local Government Areas and in the south-west region of Western Australia. The Australian Government is committed to the prompt establishment of these new units so that Indigenous community needs can be addressed and family violence tackled in these regions.

The increased number of FVPLS units will enable more Indigenous victims of family violence and/or sexual assault to access legal advice and casework services, together with other critical services such as sexual assault counselling. Additional resources will be allocated to increase preventative measures; for example, preventative education and community-awareness activities.

Unit coordinators and staff, together with chairpersons, members and staff of management boards and auspice bodies, were invited to attend the conference. There were approximately 70 participants.

The five key conference outcomes were:

1. **Accountability:** FVPLS delegates reported on their experiences attending international conferences on Indigenous-specific family violence.
2. **Professional development and training:** Information and evaluations were presented regarding accredited training attended by FVPLS representatives and sponsored by the Department.
3. **Funding issues:** Information was distributed regarding the Department's requirements relating to program funding, financial management and training.
4. **Whole of government:** Information was presented on engaging and working in partnership with key government departments to eliminate violence against women, family violence and sexual assault in Australia.

5. Community participation: Support and encouragement of community participation was facilitated by showcasing innovative community activities in response to family violence in regional and remote areas.

The conference facilitators were:

- Waverley Stanley, Director of New Wave Enterprises, which conducts personal development, motivation and leadership training for Indigenous people, with a particular focus on Indigenous youth, and
- Dallas Young, Manager, Public Health Field Research Program, School of Public Health, Tropical Medicine and Rehabilitation Services, James Cook University, Cairns campus.

About the FVPLS program

In 1998, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) board allocated funding for specialist services to assist Indigenous adults and children who are victims of family violence and/or sexual abuse, or who are at immediate risk of such violence. The FVPLS program was established in 1998 with funding of \$4.8 million. The pilot unit opened in Kempsey in 1998. Originally, 13 units were established in predominately remote and rural areas of high need around Australia.

The FVPLS program improves access to legal services and provides holistic and culturally appropriate responses to family violence in Indigenous communities. FVPLS units are community controlled justice, advisory and referral centres for victims of family violence. The units provide practical assistance and emotional support to people seeking to deal with the effects of family violence. The service delivery model focuses on breaking the pattern of violence by working with victims to prevent and reduce the incidence of family violence and sexual assault, and by providing community education. The units are highly regarded and are vital in empowering Indigenous women.

As part of the expansion of the FVPLS program, the Department engaged the Crime Research Centre at the University of Western Australia to identify regions in rural and remote Australia that were most in need of Indigenous family violence services. High-need areas were ultimately determined based on a range of statistical indicators including police, hospital and court data, the availability of complementary services in an area, and feedback from key stakeholders.

In order to achieve the objectives set out in the *Operational Framework 2006* and comply with the *General Terms and Conditions of Funding for Indigenous Programs 2006–2007* (General Terms and Conditions), each FVPLS unit is required to establish a minimum base staff structure of a coordinator, a solicitor and a sexual assault worker.

Welcome

Bishop Malcolm opened the conference by giving an Acknowledgment to Country. His opening address was followed by dancing and signing performed by the Danny Benjamin School Dancers.

Margaret Beattie, National Program Director of Family Violence Prevention Legal Services, Indigenous Law and Justice Branch, Attorney-General's Department, welcomed participants to the conference and thanked everyone for their attendance. She explained that the aim of the conference was to facilitate robust discussion regarding the future direction of the FVPLS program and associated training. Margaret encouraged active participation in discussions and advised attendees that they should feel free to raise issues with Departmental staff.

Margaret then formally introduced the Departmental staff attending the conference, whose role was to ensure continuity of the conference program and to provide support to the participants:

- Debbie Richards – Assistant Director (West)
- Glenn Phillips – Assistant Director (East)
- Mark Champion – Administration support and video footage
- Troy Robinson – Administration support and video footage
- Sacheen Deemal – Scribe
- Catherine Wright – Scribe
- Rhonda Woodward – Counselling/debriefing

Margaret also welcomed representatives from Family Relationship Centres and the Family Court, and thanked them for their contribution to the conference program. She emphasised the importance of the role that the two conference facilitators were to perform over the next two days. Margaret concluded by encouraging everyone to take advantage of the networking opportunities available at the conference.

Conference pa

Eunice Blackmore

Phynea Clarke

Jane Silverton

Rene Adams

Elizabeth Carney

Brian Healey

Jennifer Salam

Maureen Dodd

Debranne Geeves

Key outcome 1: Accountability

5th Healing Our Spirit Worldwide Conference 2006

Presenters: Brian Healey and Rhonda Solien

In August 2006, the Attorney-General's Department sponsored four representatives from FVPLS units to attend the 5th Healing Our Spirit Worldwide (HOSW) Conference in Edmonton, Canada. The Department's representatives were Brian Healey (Cairns), Rhonda Solien (Darwin), Cheryl Biggs (Geraldton) and Lillian Davis (Alice Springs). The Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination, part of the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, sponsored four representatives and the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (OATSIH), part of the Department of Health and Ageing, sponsored five representatives. These 13 people were accompanied by Margaret Beattie, National Program Director, Family Violence Prevention Legal Services and an officer from OATSIH.

The purpose of the conference was to bring together Indigenous peoples from across the globe to share information on best practice models, program successes, traditional and cultural programming and research into health, healing, addictions and self-determination. The HOSW conference is a recognised forum where Indigenous service providers share ideas and gain insights from successful outcomes in other Indigenous communities. Importantly, the conference focuses on programs, initiatives and research developed with, by and for Indigenous peoples.

The presenters described the networks they developed at the conference and showed photographs taken during their time at Edmonton.

The conference's opening ceremony included messages, performances and speakers from a variety of organisations, including:

- Treaty 6
- Native Counselling Services of Alberta
- Government of Canada
- Assembly of First Nations
- Province of Alberta
- City of St Alberta
- Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, and
- Métis National Council.

The conference focused on the cycle of life—from child to youth, youth to adult, and adult to elder—by providing venues for the sharing of programs, cultures, stories, songs, dances and wisdom. There was a mixture of keynote speakers, prayer, and international guest speakers. The representatives attended and participated in a pipe ceremony,

feasting, smudging, drum-calls, elders' gatherings, Youth Track workshops and an international Indigenous marketplace.

The conference was planned as a celebration of the health and healing of Indigenous peoples around the world. According to the FVPLS representatives, the gathering was a testament to the resilience, courage, tenacity and will of Indigenous peoples everywhere to overcome barriers to achieving self-determination in health and in healing.

A report on the HOSW conference is currently being prepared by the FVPLS representatives in consultation with Departmental FVPLS staff.

Margaret Beattie delivered the following paper at the HOSW conference. This paper was also presented at the National Conference 2006.

**Paper presented by Margaret Beattie,
National Program Director,
Family Violence Prevention Legal Services,
to the 5th Healing Our Spirit Worldwide Conference, August 2006**

I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians, the Treaty 6 communities of the country which we are standing on today, and give thanks for allowing this significant event to take place in your magnificent homeland.

I have worked in the Australian Public Service for approximately 20 years. In this role I have endeavoured to effect change by making genuine commitments and contributions over the years to improve the quality and longevity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's lives. Prior to my current role I worked in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) in the provision of housing loans, human resource management, intellectual property, grant management policy and family violence at the national level.

In Australia, each State or Territory has relevant domestic and family violence legislation. New South Wales was the first state to recognise domestic violence in legislation under the *Crimes Act 1900*, where the objectives of the legislation was to:

- ensure the safety and protection of all persons who experience domestic violence
- reduce and prevent violence between persons who are in a domestic relationship, and
- enact provisions that are consistent with certain principles underlying the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women.

All States and Territories have recognised the importance of legislating for the Indigenous concept of family and domestic violence, which is a criminal offence in Australia. Victim's rights and safety are paramount in the eyes of Australian law.

The Australian Government has given priority to domestic violence by placing the issue high on the national agenda since 1986 when consultations took place for the National Agenda for Women. In 1987, the Office of the Status of Women commenced a three-year public education campaign alongside a national survey to establish and gauge community attitudes towards violence against women. In 1992, the National Strategy on Violence Against Women was launched, which cemented the Commonwealth Government's firm commitment to eradicating domestic violence by requesting State and Territory governments to report on five identified objectives annually. These are:

- to ensure that all women escaping violence have immediate access to police intervention and legal protection which prioritises safety for the woman, safe shelter, confidential services and the longer-term resources needed to live independently and free from violence
- to work towards a universal intolerance of the use of violence in Australian society generally and, in particular, to achieve full acknowledgment by all Australians that violence towards women is a crime, regardless of circumstances, the background or the culture of the violent person or the victim
- to achieve more just and equitable responses by the criminal justice system, which highlight the seriousness of the offences, and to strengthen the authority of the law in its effective and important role of influencing community attitudes and supporting social change
- to build on the significant reforms, policy and program work of all levels of government and the community towards improving the status of women, including the elimination of violence against all women, and
- to develop mechanisms and processes which allow for a coordinated approach to the implementation of Objectives 1 to 4 and which are effective in monitoring the progress and achievements of governments in the elimination of violence against women.

In 1995, the Office of Status of Women repeated the 1987 survey and conducted an analysis of the results to identify differences and shifts in social change. In 1997, the Australian Bureau of Statistics conducted a Women's Safety Survey, prompting the first phase of Partnerships against Domestic Violence Initiative, which was completed in June 2005.

In the 2005 budget, the Australian Government announced a \$75.7 million commitment to continue to take a lead role in eliminating domestic violence and sexual assault—the Women's Safety Agenda, which builds upon the Partnerships Against Domestic Violence—through the Office of the Status of Women in the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. The additional funding addresses four broad themes: prevention, health, justice and services. Both the Women's Safety Agenda and the Partnership Against Domestic Violence aim to decrease the impacts of domestic violence and sexual assault upon the community by building on the achievements of the community. These initiatives include:

- the re-running of the successful national ‘Violence against women, Australia says no’ campaign
- the continued funding for the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse and the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault
- undertaking research projects on domestic violence and sexual assault
- providing additional training for nurses in regional and rural areas
- providing additional training for the criminal justice sector on sexual assault
- providing a dedicated resource at the Australian Institute of Criminology, and
- a men’s line.

Family Violence in Indigenous Communities

Concurrently as the effort and dialogue by the Commonwealth Government increased, Australian States and Territories conducted their own consultation and research relating to family violence in Indigenous communities. The release in 1999 of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women’s task force on violence report* was an important milestone for Indigenous recognition of domestic and family violence issues. The taskforce set out to achieve the following:

- to advise on the development and implementation of policy and program initiatives aimed at addressing violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, children and families in Queensland, including consideration of the effectiveness of programs currently funded by the Queensland Government and the impact of Commonwealth policy, program and guidelines
- to advise on whether changes should be made to any laws, whether any additional laws should be made, whether any changes should be made to the way these laws are applied or enforced and related policies and procedures, and any non-legislative approach including advising on existing Commonwealth and State legislation and, in doing so, ensure that there is no duplication of resources and effort with other Queensland Government initiatives such as the Task Force on Women and the Criminal Code
- to advise on changes to laws where customary law should be recognised and included
- to provide the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Women’s Policy with an interim report of its findings by 31 March 1999, and a final report and recommendations for reform by 30 April 1999
- in recognition of work already undertaken, have regard to all relevant reports, studies, investigations and other documentation of the subject both within Queensland and other Australian jurisdictions and report to the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Women’s Policy on the relevance of the recommendations advanced in such reports, studies, investigations and other documentation, and in light of existing laws and

policies and the current and future resources available to both the Queensland Government and the non-government sector, and

- the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Women's Policy, the Honourable Judy Spence MLA, is to advise all relevant Ministers on the final report and recommendations and to seek a whole-of-government response.

All States and Territories throughout Australia have followed suit in undertaking similar research by implementing a taskforce, inquiry and/or leading research in the area, including:

- *Putting the picture together inquiry into the response by government agencies to complaints of family violence and child abuse in Aboriginal communities*, July 2002 (Western Australia)
- *Victorian Indigenous family violence taskforce*, December 2003 (Victoria)
- *Palya Munu Kunpu Nyinama living safe and growing strong* (South Australia)
- *Aboriginal child sexual assault taskforce*, 2006 (New South Wales)
- *Our commitment to women's safety in South Australia*, March 2005 (South Australia)
- *Ya pulingina kani good to see you talk*, 2002 (Tasmania), and
- *Aboriginal family violence strategy*, 2000 (Northern Territory).

The experience that Indigenous women, men and children have with violence was disclosed and created a new level of awareness within the wider community about the intricate kinship systems and deep cultural connection that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people retain, and which is still evident in today's society.

It became evident in the taskforce reports that both State and Federal Governments need to address family violence specifically relating to Indigenous people due to the urgent need to strengthen and improve the existing responses to abuse and violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It is acknowledged by the Commonwealth Government that there is clear need for long-term strategies and solutions to address the endemic nature of abuse and violence in many communities.

The reports specifically define the problem in relation to how the local people understand violence, detail the extent of the problem, the causes, interventions that are working and not working, and have made significant recommendations for change that is applicable to both Federal and State Governments. The extent of family violence and child abuse among Indigenous families continues to be a matter of grave concern for both governments and Indigenous communities.

At the recent Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting held on 14 July 2006, it was agreed that a long-term, generational commitment is needed to overcome Indigenous disadvantage. It was also agreed that the working group will consider how to build clearer links between the *Overcoming Indigenous disadvantage: key indicators*

report framework, the *National framework of principles for delivering services to Indigenous Australians*, the *COAG Reconciliation framework* and the bilateral agreements between the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments.

COAG also agreed to adopt a collaborative approach to addressing particularly the issues of policing, justice, support and governance. Bilateral agreements between the Commonwealth and States and Territories will be the key to ensuring these proceed. This approach, which has been informed by the *Intergovernmental summit on violence and child abuse in Indigenous communities* held on 26 June 2006, recognises the differing circumstances in jurisdictions and builds on successful work already being undertaken.

The Commonwealth Government has agreed to make available funds in the order of \$130 million over four years to support national and bilateral actions on the basis that the States and Territories have agreed to complement this effort with additional resources to be negotiated on a bilateral basis.

The outcomes as a result of the COAG meeting include:

- policing, community education and support for victims and witnesses
- application to customary law, and
- complementary measures.

In 2003, the then national peak body for Indigenous Affairs, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) directed Regional Councillors to have open and robust discussion with their local service providers and community members. A new strategy was launched to combat family violence, titled *Our family*. The policy represented an incredibly significant turning point in the history of the Commonwealth Government's responses to family violence. Its focus and budget was dedicated entirely to assisting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to address family violence. ATSIC committed \$23.6 million to undertake Family Violence Action Plans developed in collaboration with Regional Councils. The *Our family* policy recognised the Regional Family Violence Awareness Program, encompassing:

- the existing 13 Family Violence Legal Prevention Services
- an additional 1,000 Community Development Education Program placements to attract employment in the community services sector, and
- the provision of discretionary funds for special projects primarily in the area of education and awareness-raising campaigns.

The Australian Government made important changes to the administration of Indigenous Affairs from 1 July 2004. Special programs for Indigenous Australians are still in place, and are now administered by the agencies that provide similar services for all Australians.

The programs remain together, connected through a whole-of-government approach. Coordination is led from the top by the Ministerial Taskforce on Indigenous Affairs.

The Ministerial Taskforce sets national priorities and, commencing in 2005, coordinates a single budget for the Australian Government's Indigenous programs.

The Ministerial Taskforce is advised by a Secretaries Group (all Department heads administering major programs for Indigenous people) and the National Indigenous Council (NIC), an expert group.

In 30 locations across Australia, Indigenous Coordination Centres (ICCs) are working to ensure that Indigenous funding is coordinated on the ground, and that Indigenous people at the local and regional level have input into how funding is spent.

ICCs bring together staff from a number of agencies administering Indigenous programs, and are managed by the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination within the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. ICC Managers are charged with brokering innovative, coordinated responses to local Indigenous needs in active partnership with local communities.

Relations between government and communities are governed by the principle of 'shared responsibility', and Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRAs) are negotiated to match government investment to local Indigenous priorities. Cooperative work with the States and Territories and local government is also fundamental to the new arrangements, given their major contribution to service provision. The Council of Australia Governments is a key strategic forum, and the new arrangements build on work sponsored by COAG since 2000.

The new arrangements are also about accountability and outcomes. The performance of programs and agreements is monitored to ensure they are producing real benefits for Indigenous people. In June 2004, COAG met with all governments. They agreed that preventing family violence and child abuse in Indigenous families is a priority for action that requires a national effort. This would be achieved by jurisdictions working cooperatively to improve how they engage with each other and work in partnership with Indigenous communities to tackle these issues under a new *National framework on Indigenous family violence and child protection* set by COAG.

In Canberra there is an unprecedented commitment to driving real change in the way that governments do business. The relevant Ministers meet together regularly, as do the Secretaries.

The two key government departments that have responsibility for administering family violence programs specifically for Indigenous people are the Attorney-General's Department (AGD) and the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA). It is important that AGD and FaCSIA work in partnership and coordinate a whole-of-government approach when looking at policy development and service delivery for family violence in Indigenous communities.

On 1 July 2006, the portfolio for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs was provided with an appropriation of around \$77 million for the Indigenous portfolio, with an allocation of \$14.5 million made specifically to manage two separate programs:

the Family Violence Partnership Program and the Family Violence Regional Activities Program.

FaCSIA: The Family Violence Partnership Program builds on the Australian Government's commitment to tackling family violence and child abuse. FaCSIA provides funding for projects and initiatives that aim to develop a sustainable reduction in, and the prevention of, Indigenous family violence and child abuse through the enhancement of existing or the establishment of new services/initiatives, in partnership with both States and Territories throughout Australia.

The Family Violence Regional Activities Program aims to provide practical and flexible support for grassroots projects that have been identified by Indigenous communities as a local priority to address family violence, sexual assault, and child abuse and/or child protection. The program provides funding to address local priorities relating to family violence, sexual assault and child abuse/child protection. Of particular focus are projects that reflect the importance of protecting women and children, and breaking the cycle of violence. Some initiatives may include address issues, such as recognition, healing, grieving and/or perpetrator programs. Examples of activities funded under this program include night patrols, coordinators for safe houses, and the development of support initiatives to assist perpetrators to break the cycle of family violence.

AGD: The Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLS) program was shifted from within ATSIC to the AGD in mid 2004: clearly, the legal nature of the services fell into the Attorney-General's portfolio. The location of the 13 existing FVPLS units were determined in part by the results of the 1994 NATSIS survey conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, by other data, and by anecdotal knowledge of areas of need. Then, in the 2004–05 financial year the Australian Government committed an additional \$22.7 million to expand another 13 new FVPLS units after conducting research in conjunction with the Crime Research Centre at the University of Western Australia that identified high-need areas in rural and remote locations in Australia. Although violence is not limited to rural and remote locations, the visibility, concentration and its consuming nature seem to be most apparent in these areas. Unfortunately, these areas are the most difficult to service in conventional terms, often lacking the capacity to sustain initiatives.

Today there are 26 FVPLS operational units in Australia servicing high-need areas and located predominately in rural and remote areas. The FVPLS units aim to improve access to legal services for victims of family violence and those at risk of family violence by providing culturally appropriate responses to family violence in Indigenous communities. This is achieved by providing a range of services including legal assistance and advice; crisis counselling, including sexual assault workers; referrals to other agencies and community awareness raising initiatives about family violence.

In May 2006, the Australian Government announced increased funding to \$23.6 million over four years to fund an expansion in the number of FVPLS from 26 to 31 units. The expansion in the number of units from 26 to 31 will enable more Indigenous Australians who are victims of family violence—including sexual assault—to access legal advice and casework services, and other critical services such as sexual assault counselling.

The Commonwealth Government has committed a considerable amount of resources to increase preventative measures such as preventative education and community-awareness activities and, in addition, the 31 FVPLS units will be provided funding for an additional solicitor.

Within the Attorney-General's Department we are fortunate to possess a very dynamic team of people who are committed to and passionate about family violence and Indigenous people. The staff who are currently working in FVPLS units and at the coalface are extremely talented and committed people who possess incredible drive and integrity and are the role models and leaders in their communities. We have recruited skilled professional staff to the section that are made up of Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff. We have maintained a balance of gender and age as well, which brings a diverse range of knowledge, experience and perspective to the program.

Since that time, the AGD has consulted with both the existing and new FVPLS units in relation to the AGD Operational Framework that incorporates principles of Indigenous self management, sound governance and capacity building. We have hosted four annual National Workshop events at various locations across Australia, and one National Solicitors' Conference. We have funded 19 Indigenous FVPLS unit representatives to graduate from the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre Certificate IV in Governance. We have funded accredited sexual assault training for each sexual assault worker employed by a unit. We have reviewed the AGD Operational Framework and Performance Indicators in consultation with a working party made up of FVPLS unit representatives, and provided template documents for internal governance; for example, the Policies and Procedures Manual and Memorandums of Understanding. We ensure regular phone contact and field visits and undertake support, negotiation and advice directly from Canberra.

In addition, the AGD has sponsored 10 Indigenous representatives to attend international conferences to assist in raising the profile of FVPLS units in the international arena—including Lillian Davis, Rhonda Solien, Cheryl Biggs and Brian Healey, who will very shortly deliver a presentation based on the communities in which they work—and to learn from other countries' efforts, experiences and strategies when working with Indigenous peoples and in the family violence sector.

Within each FVPLS there are three mandatory positions, which are the coordinator, sexual assault worker and solicitor. The overwhelming majority of coordinators in the 26 operational units are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and a large percentage of field staff and administrative positions are also filled by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The success of the FVPLS program is evident in the statistics that illustrate that in 2005 there were a total of 24,296 occasions of service. Of that, there were 750 community-awareness activities undertaken, 8326 legal advice/assistance given to victims of family violence and 1652 counselling sessions specifically targeting family violence and sexual abuse and assault in rural and remote locations in Australia.

In conclusion, I would like to state that the effectiveness of the FVPLS program can be and will be in the future clearly attributed to the hands-on, highly supportive and genuine commitment of resources from the government. Although the road for the family violence program has been rocky and unknown, it is clearly achieving outcomes and making a real difference to Indigenous women, men and children experiencing or at risk of violence. There is a fundamental change: changing the way the Commonwealth Government relates to Indigenous Australians, ensuring that they deliver to their Indigenous citizens as they do to all other citizens.

Now I will introduce to you our four FVPLS unit representatives who all work in the specific area of sexual abuse and assault. They will to speak to you about some key issues within their communities, and will give you a snapshot of the experience of working in a Family Violence Prevention Legal Services unit.

7th World Indigenous Women and Wellness Conference: Warriors against violence

Presenters: Antoinette Braybrook and Kim O'Hello

In 2006, the Department sponsored two representatives from FVPLS units—Antoinette Braybrook (Melbourne) and Kim O'Hello (Kempsey)—to attend the 7th World Indigenous Women and Wellness Conference held in Vancouver, Canada.

This conference addressed the growing patterns of violence within Indigenous families and communities. Success stories were shared by Indigenous communities who have learnt effective strategies to promote wellness in their home environments and communities. Issues of violence and relationships were shared. Particular emphasis was on hearing the voice of youth and embracing elders' knowledge to promote healthier and positive futures for Indigenous communities. The conference also provided information, resources and networking opportunities for Indigenous peoples.

Attendance by FVPLS representatives attracted international attention to the work of the FVPLS units and the Australian Government's policies and programs addressing family violence. In addition, there was an opportunity to exchange information and ideas about new directions for the program.

The FVPLS representatives attended the Aboriginal Friendship Centre and familiarised themselves with current projects and initiatives. They met a broad range of people, developed solid networks, gave presentations and took many photographs.

A conference report is currently being prepared by the FVPLS representatives in consultation with Departmental FVPLS staff.

Key outcome 2: Professional development and training

Sexual assault training certificate

Presenters: Rosemary Wanganeen and Rhonda Woodward

In July 2005, Yarrow Place Rape and Sexual Assault Service in Adelaide received a request from the Department to develop and deliver training for sexual assault workers in Indigenous communities. As a result, Yarrow Place developed a proposal for consideration by the Department. That proposal was approved in March 2006.

Rhonda Woodward, who works closely with the Katherine, Fitzroy Crossing, Darwin and Kununurra FVPLS units, assisted Yarrow Place with setting up program delivery and monitoring training outcomes. Yarrow Place subsequently developed and delivered an Indigenous-specific three-day Department-accredited training course to 32 FVPLS sexual assault workers. The training was conducted in five locations around Australia. It received overwhelmingly positive feedback: participants consistently indicated that they were more than satisfied with the course content and assessment process, and with the delivery and support provided by facilitators.

Rosemary Wanganeen is a Nunga woman from Adelaide who has firsthand experiences of loss and grief from an Indigenous perspective. She is an independent consultant who runs a successful business helping both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in crisis. Rosemary's contribution to the training program was invaluable: she not only introduced participants to the topic of sexual violence in a very real and personal way, but also highlighted the importance of working from a grief-and-loss model.

Rosemary demonstrated her own particular healing model, which she developed over a 12-year period. She encouraged participants to treat her model like a meal: "Take what you want, and leave what you don't want". The model helps support staff to feel comfortable when supporting Indigenous people in their grieving processes or as a result of other traumatic events.

Rosemary imparts her theories and skills by providing training, particularly to those working in areas such as health, the justice system, welfare, education and psychology.

Accounting for non-accountants training: CPA workshops

Presenter: Debbie Richards, Assistant Director, FVPLS Section (West)

Participants at the 2005 national conference requested ongoing skills-development training. As a result, CPA Australia was contracted by the FVPLS Section to conduct accounting training for non-accountants. Training sessions were conducted in Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide and Darwin.

A total of 36 FVPLS representatives including unit staff, support staff, committee members and auspice board members attended the training. The PowerPoint presentation is available on disc and can be requested from staff at the FVPLS Section.

A participant survey was conducted once all four training sessions had been concluded. The survey revealed that the course was generally well received: most attendees were happy with the level of information presented, the presenter, course content, workbooks and exercises. Some improvements were suggested by attendees, particularly with regard to the amount and relevance of information in Workshop 1. These improvements will be incorporated into any future accounting training.

Key outcome 3: Funding issues

Presenter: Margaret Beattie

Margaret Beattie began by acknowledging those FVPLS representatives who recently attended the international conferences. She remarked that they had performed at outstanding levels, both while delivering presentations on behalf of their respective FVPLS units and as representatives of Indigenous Australia.

Margaret advised delegates that the role of Family Relationship Centres (FRCs) is to maintain healthy families by providing relationship advice. FRCs enable couples, mothers, fathers, grandparents and children to seek relationship advice and support. The Australian Government plans to establish a network of 65 FRCs across Australia.

FRCs will not replace FVPLS units. Where an FRC is co-located in the same town as an FVPLS unit, the FRC is to work collaboratively with and complement the services provided by the unit. More information on Family Relationships Centres can be found on the website at <<http://www.familyrelationships.gov.au>>.

Margaret clarified FVPLS program funding procedures and responded to various questions from participants. FVPLS units operate under a 12-month funding cycle where each unit is engaged through a *Program Funding Agreement*. This process will remain until otherwise advised. Submissions can be made electronically or on disc.

Margaret advised that a triennial funding option would subsequently make the reporting requirements less onerous. The triennial funding option is currently being explored, and units will be notified of any changes.

Overview of financial management

Presenter: Glenn Phillips, Assistant Director, FVPLS Section (East)

Glenn Phillips' presentation was based on financial management and Departmental reporting obligations under the Program Funding Agreement (PFA)—specifically, the Periodic Financial Statement and the Audited Financial Statement. Glenn also provided information regarding the content of the Periodic Financial Statement.

Under the PFA, the following process should be adhered to:

- (a) Submission received by the Department from an entity that seeks funding to undertake a specific activity
- (b) Agreement entered into between the Department and an entity to provide a specific service
- (c) Letter executed by both parties
- (d) *General Terms and Conditions for Funding Agreements Relating to Indigenous Programs 2006-07* and schedule(s)
- (e) Schedule setting out program/activity information, and
- (f) Program: Family Violence Prevention Legal Services.

The PFA addresses program outcomes and activity objectives.

- (a) Program outcomes:
 - Promote and sustain a non-violent environment in which Indigenous people can live, nurturing and reflecting Indigenous values of caring and sharing, to support and meet the emotional, physical and social needs of family members.
 - Provide legal assistance, counselling and ongoing support to Indigenous people who are victims of family violence and/or sexual abuse, or who are at immediate risk of violence.
 - Provide community education and improve the awareness of families and communities of the effect of family violence, child abuse and sexual assault.
- (b) Activity objectives:
 - Provide legal assistance, casework and court support to victims of family violence.
 - Provide crisis counselling and referral services to victims of family violence and sexual assault/abuse.
 - Undertake community promotion and prevention initiatives.

- Provide services that are accessible and culturally appropriate to Indigenous adults and children regardless of gender, sexual preference, family relationships, location, disability, literacy or language group.

It is vital that units comply with reporting obligations. Compliance demonstrates the competence of unit management and helps to ensure a unit's ongoing operation. Reporting obligations are detailed under item 8 of the *General Terms and Conditions for Funding Agreements Relating to Indigenous Programs 2006–2007*. The following written reports must be provided to the Department at the times specified in the schedule of the PFA:

- (a) income and expenditure statement
- (b) schedule of assets
- (c) listing of debtors and creditors, and
- (d) quarterly completed business activity statements.

Activity performance information must also be reported, including:

- (a) a description of actual performance against objectives and performance indicators
- (b) whether an activity has been completed, and
- (c) whether activity objectives were achieved.

In addition, within 60 business days after the completion of each financial year in which a payment of funding is made, an audited General Purpose Financial Report as defined by the Australian Accounting Standards Board and prepared in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards, in respect of the funding, must be submitted. This report must include:

- (a) consolidated information, including all financial interests and transactions of the organisation
- (b) an individual balance sheet and cash flow statements for each schedule as included in the PFA, and
- (c) a clear statement confirming that all financial information is included for all activities, that the financial statements represent the financial transactions fairly and based on proper accounts and records.

A report from an approved auditor must be submitted. The report must include:

- (a) specific comment on the adequacy of financial controls being maintained by the FVPLS unit
- (b) specific comment on the unit's financial position

- (c) specific comment on the unit's ability to meet its taxation liabilities
- (d) specific comment on the unit's compliance with obligations to pay superannuation entitlements
- (e) where there are any qualifications or limitations on the audit, and
- (f) an itemised list of fees paid to directors, stating how much was paid, to whom, when, and what travel costs were involved.

In relation to the report provided by an approved auditor, a certificate must be submitted stating that:

- (a) all funding received was spent for the purpose of an activity and in accordance with the PFA and that the FVPLS unit has complied with the PFA
- (b) salaries and allowances paid to persons involved in an activity are in accordance with any applicable award or agreement in force under any relevant law on industrial or workplace relations, and
- (c) at the time the report or financial statement is provided to Department, the unit is able to pay all debts as and when they fall due and has sufficient resources to discharge all debts at the end of the current financial year.

Where an FVPLS unit is incorporated, a certificate must be provided by the:

- Chairperson
- Chief Executive Officer
- Chief Financial Officer, or
- a person authorised by the corporation to sign documents that legally bind the corporation.

The Department must be satisfied that the person providing certification is authorised to do so.

Glenn also provided a brief overview regarding acquittal documentation, a coordinator's responsibility specifically relating to the financial administration of an FVPLS unit, periodic financial statements, accrual accounting and employee entitlements.

Glenn's PowerPoint presentation is available on disc upon request to the FVPLS Section.

Training agenda 2006–07

Presenters: Margaret Beattie and Debbie Richards

Following discussion and consultation with participants regarding units' training needs and priorities over the next financial year, five key areas were identified:

1. working with children
2. front-line management: legal training coordinator
3. governance
4. finance/submission/recording, and
5. sexual assault.

Key outcome 4: Whole of government

Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs: Family Relationship Services Program

Presenter: Robyn Fleming

The Family Relationship Services Program (FRSP) is funded by the Australian Government and is currently administered by the Family Relationship Services and Child Support Policy Branch of the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA).

The initial focus of the FRSP was on marriage guidance services. However, the program has been expanded and currently aims to:

- enable children, young people and adults in all their diversity to develop and sustain safe supportive and nurturing family relationships, and
- minimise the emotional, social and economic costs associated with disruption of family relationships.

The Attorney-General's Department also contributes significant funding for the FRSP: a Business Partnership Agreement exists between FaCSIA and the Department in relation to the FRSP program.

The principal services funded under the FRSP include:

- Family Relationship Centres (jointly funded by Attorney-General's Department and FaCSIA)
- family relationship mediation (funded by Attorney-General's Department)
- children's contact services (funded by Attorney-General's Department)
- Contact Orders Program (funded by Attorney-General's Department)
- conciliation services (funded by Attorney-General's Department)
- men and family relationship services (funded by Attorney-General's Department)
- family relationship education (funded by Attorney-General's Department)
- family relationships skills training (funded by Attorney-General's Department)
- adolescent mediation, family therapy (funded by Attorney-General's Department)
- specialised family violence services (funded by Attorney-General's Department), and
- regional primary dispute resolution (funded by Attorney-General's Department).

A review of the FRSP, commenced in October 2003, was coordinated by FaCSIA in consultation with the Attorney-General's Department. The review gathered information to inform future directions of the program. Key stages of the review were the development of a framework paper to seek broad input from industry, and two major consultancies to gather detailed information from service providers and clients.

Attorney-General's Department: Family Court of Australia and Family Relationship Centre, Cairns

Presenter: Josephine Akee

Josephine Akee is a 61-year-old Torres Strait Islander who has been heavily involved in Indigenous organisations and Indigenous issues for the past 30 years. Josephine has served as a member of several national bodies, where she advocated on behalf of family law services with a focus on the welfare and wellbeing of children. Over the last 20 years, she has worked in three Federal Government Departments in the service delivery of Indigenous programs.

For the past eight years, Josephine worked as an Indigenous Family Liaison Officer in the Cairns Registry of the Family Court of Australia. Her duties included:

- being the link between the court and members of Indigenous communities—providing communities with information about the court and providing the court with information about the communities and their issues
- assisting with the court's mediations and Family Report interviews regarding Indigenous families
- assisting the court to access services of appropriate cultural experts and advisers
- assisting family law practitioners and independent child lawyers regarding Indigenous cases
- explaining to Indigenous clients the services offered by other relevant agencies and advising how to obtain referrals to those agencies
- networking with other agencies regarding Indigenous clients
- assisting with Indigenous cultural awareness training both internally and externally, and
- delivering presentations on the court's Indigenous programs.

When Josephine commenced employment with the Family Relationship Centre in Cairns, she advised staff that Indigenous people do not concentrate on the individual but, rather, on the extended family as a collective unit; therefore, the centre's programs should focus on the whole family. However, Josephine emphasised that people often forget that people learn from experience; therefore, child representatives need to focus solely on the child and the child's needs. As a result of Josephine's input, Indigenous families and children are now receiving appropriate representation and support in terms of services.

The national focus of FRCs is on mediation: they encourage clients to discuss their problems—both past and present—and to identify possible solutions.

Attorney-General's Department: Family Relationship Centre, Townsville

Presenter: Alan Johnson

Alan Johnson was born in Gladstone, Queensland. He is of Aboriginal/South Sea Islander descent and is a member of the Gureng-Gureng language group from the Burnett River Region. Alan provided an overview of his work with Indigenous peoples.

Alan worked as one of Australia's first police liaison officers in Redfern, Sydney. He was appointed to this position after the Redfern riots in 1988. Alan was then employed by the Queensland Department of Education as a community education counsellor and cultural adviser to the Department's principals and teaching staff in the south-east Queensland region.

Alan then worked as a liaison officer for the Department of Housing (Queensland) before working with the Townsville Aboriginal and Islander Media Association as producer, announcer and director for the Aboriginal radio station 4KIG based in Townsville. As well as being vice chairperson of the Anna Rina Rose project in the Townsville area, which is a project created to support children who are victims of domestic violence homicide, Alan is an ambassador for the White Ribbon Day organisation.

A senior pastor of the Twin Cities Gospel Outreach Centre Church in Townsville, Alan is also a representative of the national body of the Gospel Outreach Centre International executive committee. In his role as a local pastor, he runs a radio program each Monday night on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community radio station 4KIG.

Alan is currently employed as an Indigenous Adviser with the Townsville Family Relationship Centre, where he provides outreach services to other communities. This role requires him to network and promote the FRC in the communities of Ayr, Ingham, Charters Towers and outlying regions in and surrounding Townsville. He provides advice to the staff of key stakeholders and other community organisations about roles, functions, programs and referral processes adopted by the FRCs. Alan also liaises and communicates with both the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elder groups and individuals and, when invited, addresses community meetings and gatherings to promote FRCs and their services.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner and Acting Race Discrimination Commissioner, Tom Calma

Tom Calma is an Aboriginal elder from the Kungarakan tribal group, whose traditional lands are south-west of Darwin, and the Iwaidja tribal group, whose traditional lands are on the Cobourg Peninsula in Northern Territory. He has been involved in Indigenous affairs at a local, community, State, national and international level and worked in the public sector for over 30 years. Tom is the Social Justice Commissioner with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission (HREOC), a position that was created as a response to the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and the National Enquiry into Racist Violence.

HREOC is a national independent statutory government body that was established by the *Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986* (the HREOC Act). The Federal Attorney-General is the Minister responsible in Parliament for the Commission. Under the legislation administered by the Commission, it has responsibilities for inquiring into alleged infringements under five anti-discrimination laws—the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*, the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*, the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the *Age Discrimination Act 2004* and the HREOC Act.

In addition, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner has specific functions under the HREOC Act and under the *Native Title Act 1993*. These functions relate to the monitoring of the enjoyment or otherwise by Indigenous people of their rights under the law.

HREOC's works involve submissions, reports and projects; for example, the Northern Territory Law Reform Committee Inquiry into Aboriginal Customary Law in the Northern Territory and the report on Indigenous women in corrections published in the *Social Justice Report 2002*. One of its latest reports, *Ending family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities: key issues*, is an overview of research and findings by HREOC from 2001–06. The report found that there were high levels of family violence and high levels of sexual assault of women and children. It also found that one in five people who were fostered and one in ten people who were institutionalised reported sexual abuse and one in ten were sexually abused in a work placement organised by the Protection Board.

In researching children's rights and children as victims of crime, HREOC reported that children are most vulnerable, and that violence and abuse impacts on children's mental and physical health as well as their development and overall wellbeing. Australia is a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which emphasises children's rights to physical and personal integrity, and outlines States' obligations to protect children from all forms of physical or mental violence.

The United Nations (UN) Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children made recommendations to prevent and reduce violence against children. The UN's report, *An end to violence against children*, presented a key message:

Violence against children is not inevitable. It can and must be prevented; no violence against children is justifiable, and all violence against children is preventable.

The declaration of the basis of principles of justice for victims of crime and for the victims of abuse of power states:

- Victims' rights are now included in Australia's State and Territory legislation.
- Victims' services need to be accessible to all, especially to those in remote areas.
- Victim's services should empower victims.
- Services should be integrated into mental health, substance abuse and family violence services.
- Awareness training and promotion are vital.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principles must be followed by State and Territory governments.

The 10 key challenges in addressing family violence and abuse in Indigenous communities are:

1. turning Government commitments into action
2. supporting Indigenous participation
3. supporting Indigenous community initiatives and networks
4. supporting human rights education in Indigenous communities
5. not forgetting Indigenous men and not stereotyping them as abusers
6. looking for positives and celebrating victories
7. reasserting Indigenous cultural norms and regaining respect in Indigenous communities
8. ensuring robust accountability and monitoring mechanisms
9. changing the mindset
10. targeting need.

Tom concluded his address with the following quote:

Let us all listen to the voices of Indigenous peoples, and act as their partners to protect Indigenous rights, particularly those of Indigenous children. This will not only help to right historic wrongs and remove injustices, it will truly enrich us all. With our help, the Indigenous children of today can be leaders of tomorrow.

Kofi Annan, 2003

Key outcome 5: Community participation

Cape York Family Violence Prevention Legal Unit

Presenters: Kimiko Gabey, Brian Healey and Jennifer Salam

The presenters provided an overview of the Cape York Family Violence Prevention Legal Unit, based in Cairns, which delivers family violence prevention and legal services to the Cape York region. Services include:

- legal advice and casework assistance
- initial crisis counselling to victims of family violence and sexual assault
- assistance and support to victims of sexual assault
- child protection and support
- information, support and referral services
- community awareness and prevention initiatives
- referral to mediation services, and
- referral to perpetrator programs.

From May 2001–January 2003 the unit was governed by the management committee of its auspice body: North Queensland Women’s Legal Service Inc. It was funded by ATSIC and employed two staff. From January 2003–January 2005 the unit was auspiced by Tharpuntoo Cape York Legal Service, governed by that body’s management committee, funded by ATSIC and still employed only two staff.

In January 2005 the unit became an independent incorporated body, set up office and created its own governance structure. In this process, the unit obtained funding from the Department to assist with setting-up costs and employment of extra staff.

As the unit was fairly new, it operated under an Interim Board from May–December 2005. The Interim Board comprised representatives from all communities within the service region. General meetings from January–July 2006 provided opportunities to consolidate and increase membership and to plan community meetings. From that time, memberships continued to grow, community meetings became a regular occurrence and the unit’s strategic operations and planning were completed. During this time, the unit also had to recruit staff, establish its office, network with communities and deliver appropriate services.

Within the Cape York Family Violence Prevention Legal Unit, 11 staff members are currently employed in various roles divided between its East and West units. The west coast comprises five Aboriginal communities: Mapoon, Napranum, Aurukun, Pormpuraaw and Kowanyama, and has one regional town: Weipa. The east coast comprises three Aboriginal communities: Lockhart River, Hopevale and Wujal Wujal, and has three regional towns: Cooktown, Coen and Laura.

Staff of the East and West units conduct regular training and debriefing sessions together when they return to Cairns. However, the majority of their time is spent in the field.

The Cape York Family Violence Prevention Legal Unit also delivers programs to schools and information sessions to relevant service providers. The unit focuses on community engagement by organising camps that strengthen the social, cultural and personal wellbeing.

Marninwarntikura Family Violence Prevention Unit

Presenters: Christine Gray and Jodie Bell

The presenters provided background information on crime statistics. According to the University of Western Australia's Crime Research Centre 2001 report on crime in Western Australia:

- Indigenous people commit violent offences 51 times more frequently than non-Indigenous people.
- Indigenous persons commit good order offences 92 times more frequently than non-Indigenous people.
- In 2001 in Western Australia, women accounted for 71% of Indigenous victims of violent crimes.
- In 2000 the highest level of violence, including the highest rate of sexual offences, was recorded in the Kimberley region.

Marninwarntikura Family Violence Prevention Unit is funded by the Department and is located at Fitzroy Crossing in the Kimberley region of Western Australia, where there are 27 traditional language groups. The unit provides outreach services to 17 communities in the Fitzroy River valley.

Fitzroy Crossing, whose population is conservatively estimated at 1500, is a service town for cattle stations and tourists in the centre of the Shire of Derby. It is situated where the Great Northern Highway crosses the Fitzroy River, 400 km east of Broome, 260 km east of Derby and 300 km to the west of Halls Creek. The local language is Bunuba.

On 26 June 2006, staff from the unit and the Department travelled to Kupartiya Country, approximately 500 kilometres from Broome, to attend the Marninwarntikura Women's Bush Meeting from 26–30 June 2006. This area was one of the last areas to be colonised due to its distance from other population areas and its difficult terrain. A brief gold rush in the late 19th century led to the establishment of settlements such as Halls Creek and attracted many Malaysian, Chinese and Japanese people to the area. With the dedication and support of staff in the Marninwarntikura FVPLS unit, the bush meeting brought together approximately 100 women and 20 children from neighbouring river language groups. Languages spoken in the region include Gooniyandi, Nyikina and Bunuba.

The bush meeting commenced with a Welcome to Country by Kupartiya traditional owners. The agenda included speakers from the Department, Western Australian Police, Child Protection, Mental Health, leadership speakers and wellbeing speakers, who spoke about the effects of grog and gunga. Economic independence, business ideas and changes to the Commonwealth Development Employment Projects (CDEP) were also discussed. Indigenous women's small business was showcased through a successful soap making business, and the mobile kindergarten proved to be very popular.

Outcomes of the bush meeting were as follows:

- The women approved changes to the Marninwarntikura FVPLS unit's internal staffing structure.
- Interim arrangements were agreed to deal with the closing of the women's shelter for renovations, with five safe houses for women and children identified in each community.
- Information sharing occurred with key agencies regarding current issues impacting on communities; for example, alcohol, drugs, care for children and night patrols.
- Information was accessed from government, private and corporate sectors regarding future opportunities and process for successfully articulating the needs of each community.
- A date was agreed for the Marninwarntikura unit's annual general meeting.

Sisters Inside Inc

Presenter: Debbie Kilroy, Director

Sisters Inside advocates for the human rights of women in the criminal justice system and addresses gaps in the services available to them. Debbie Kilroy was the keynote speaker at the FVPLS conference. Her speech is reprinted below.

Debbie Kilroy OAM, Director of Sisters Inside FVPLS National Conference Speech Cairns, 28 October 2006

Firstly, I would like us all to take a moment to think of all the women who are locked away in prisons tonight across Australia—approximately 2,000 of them. And, most appallingly, about 500 of these women are Indigenous. I want you to imagine what they have been doing today—what they are doing now.

The majority would now be locked down in their concrete cells—alone, isolated, distressed.

If they have been ‘privileged’ today they may have had a family member or friend or their children visit them—they would have been able to touch their faces, stroke their hair, hug them tight, kiss them tenderly on the cheeks—having that special moment that we all here can have daily.

At what cost, though? After their visit they would have been taken into an area where they would have been strip searched. Let me clarify that. Across Australian jurisdictions it is called a ‘dignified’ strip search. “What does that mean?” you may be thinking. Top half of your clothes off, lift your breasts, flick your hair, hold your arms above your head and turn around, then put your bra back on, now remove the bottom half of your clothing, turn, raise your feet, squat, spread your cheeks and cough; if you are menstruating, remove your tampon or pad and hand it to the prison officer. This is what a ‘dignified’ strip search is, and how many women paid today for a visit from their children, family and friends.

For those whose behaviour was not favourable to prison staff today—the women who are not well and have mental health concerns, those who get distressed—they were probably left in isolation—and who didn’t have a visit or attend a program or go to industry—they were probably handcuffed and body-belted and medically restrained—left in a suicide gown in isolation wondering what is happening to them, thinking of their children, family, and friends, knowing that they cannot touch them, speak to them as we all have been able to today.

As we eat and drink and socialise as we choose tonight, I ask you to remember all of these women now as I speak. I am remembering Fyodor Dostoyevsky who, in 1861, said: “The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons”. It is little wonder that his book was entitled *The house of the dead*.

This conference is being held in a place which wasn't always a tourist mecca of shops and hotels. It was once the true home of groups of Indigenous people who lived rich lives in the extraordinary beauty of wild rainforest and mangrove, hills and rivers and ocean. I would like to thank and acknowledge the traditional custodians of this beautiful land, to say how privileged I feel to be able to walk on land and beaches where Indigenous people nurtured long ago, a place they still love and nurture today. And thank you to the Attorney-General's office for the invitation.

And I'd like to start this address by saying how honoured and pleased I am to be invited here, to spend time among you and to speak to you. I hope the last few days of your conference have been productive and, most importantly, allowing yourself time to share your stories of fantastic work practice and to continue to build relationships and strength within and between all your organisations.

You are here to address and talk about issues of grave importance to all Aboriginal and Islander women, men and children, and I feel humbled to be asked to contribute to the community of thought and effort that you bring. Aboriginal women and children, family violence, legal services and organisations like yours that are managed and governed by Indigenous women are such a fundamental importance to ensure that family violence is challenged and stopped.

I stand here as a woman who walks with you not just through my deep convictions about humanity and equality and dignity and human rights, but through my work with Sisters Inside and, perhaps most importantly, through my family. I am married to Joe, whose country is south of here—Batchelor—and I have two beautiful children. Well, they are adults now, but they are still our children.

I have long and strong connections with your community, connections that are dear to me and this is where I come from, where my heart is, when I stand here to speak with you tonight.

Despite all that, I am very aware that I stand here talking from a position of whiteness and privilege. I know that I am not someone who has to deal with the racism and discrimination that all Aboriginal and Islander people deal with every day, and the active and the covert discrimination you experience in just about every area of your lives. So I thought I would share with you some of my journey, the journey of Sisters Inside and our experience of discrimination.

I spent a large part of my childhood in juvenile detention and then, in my 20s, faced a mandatory life sentence in Boggo Road Prison in Brisbane. My father died when I was in youth prison and the management blamed me for his death. After being told I was so bad that it was my fault he died. This was devastating, as you can imagine, for a young child— to be told by those in authority that I killed my dad.

Then my last stint in prison my close friend was murdered as I sat beside her—brutally stabbed. Another trauma to deal with in a prison with no support.

A criminal record is probably enough to invite discrimination but I suppose I invited more through my actions after I left prison because I didn't choose to leave the prison experience behind: I couldn't. And I didn't choose to leave the women in there behind: I couldn't.

Few people willingly seek out knowledge of how prisons really work, and I became determined to take that knowledge to them, to the free world—and to anyone who would listen. This is how Sisters Inside was born. It began with women, it grew from within, and it is and always has been of, by and for women inside.

Apart from services delivered inside the prison, like sexual assault counselling, drug and alcohol counselling, Indigenous women's support services, link-up programs for women with children, pre- and post-release support, Sisters Inside's management arm lobbies and advocates for women and for their human rights. That management committee consists of women in the free world with skills and backgrounds in government, the law, human resources, education and media but, most importantly, they are women who share my passion and the women's passion for a world without prisons. But I'll come back to that later.

What makes Sisters Inside truly unique is that women on the inside make up the senior members of that management committee. They are the driving force. This committee is the beating heart of Sisters Inside. We are led and guided by women inside. It is their organisation. This crucial fact informs everything we do and how we do it. It makes us unique throughout the world.

This is the real power of the organisation: that it is truly in the hands of those it serves. This is the way it stays true to its vision. It is authentic: it reflects the real experience of women, and is true to them. This is its abiding strength.

Of course, to be true to women in prison we have to reflect them in every way. You here are no strangers to the numbers of Indigenous women in the criminal injustice system. To reflect that and to ensure Sisters Inside is a culturally safe organisation for Indigenous women and children and their families and, of course, our staff, a third of our employees are Indigenous. We also have a senior Indigenous practitioner in a position of authority: someone our non-Indigenous workers can consult for guidance and to ensure that the non-Indigenous staff are supporting Indigenous women and children within the boundaries of such direction. This is a crucial part of our work with Indigenous women and their children.

It's about walking our talk. If we didn't operate as a culturally safe organisation then Indigenous women wouldn't come to our door. It is about those other connections we have with Indigenous organisations and how we walk and work together. To name one and acknowledge them because they are here is the AFVPLS in Melbourne. Sisters Inside has worked closely over the last few years with Antoinette Braybrook and Aunty Marion to support and build from the ground a committee that is directed and driven by Indigenous women in prison in Victoria with the vision of their own organisation.

There are plenty of non-Indigenous organisations around the country where this doesn't happen. Where networks and relationships aren't built and services are not being accessed by Indigenous people. I hear non-Indigenous people question: "Why don't you access our organisation—the door is always open?" You all know why Indigenous women, men and children do not access the majority of non-Indigenous organisations. However, we as non-Indigenous people have to address this. And this question should never be asked of Indigenous people as to why Indigenous women, men and children do not access our services. We as non-Indigenous people have to address our own whiteness and privilege and respond to our own that ask such questions.

At Sisters Inside we know that if we can't connect with Indigenous women and their children and have relationships with them and the wider Indigenous community, we will fail. We should close our doors and walk away because it is a clear indication that we are not walking our talk.

This is why your organisations that are present at this conference are crucial to Indigenous women, men and children—to have specific Indigenous services to address family violence, prevention, and access to legal services and, most importantly, that they are governed by Indigenous people in your communities—whether they be in capital cities, out in the bush or in remote areas. Your services in all of these areas are fundamentally important because we know there are Indigenous women and children living in all these places across the country who are experiencing horrific violence and they access your organisations without hesitation. Your organisations are truly in the hands of those you serve.

I am sure the Department that provides funding for your organisations understands this as well and I would think that part of their role is to speak out and support your organisations no matter what location. And, of course, challenge discrimination in that support for you all. This support is incredibly important because it seems to me that things are getting worse, not better, for us all in the community sector.

We here in Queensland are living in a place where it has always been dangerous to speak out. It still is. I think for a while we got complacent about that. The bad old days of conservative rule when the special branch recorded every voice of dissent, when police bashings were commonplace at every protest rally—those days seemed to disappear when we got a Labor government in 1989 after more than 30 years. For a while it seemed you could speak out without punishment.

But as the electorate became more volatile and left-wing governments became nervous, the fear campaigns began again. Suddenly we were getting the 'tough on drugs' and 'tough on crime' campaigns and the marginalisation of anyone who dared to disagree. At Sisters Inside we've been making a lot of noise about the criminalisation of women and about disadvantage and the links between them for a long time. We've spoken out loudly against any government or institution we saw was inciting fear, whether that was through 'lock 'em up and throw away the key' policies, 'tough on crime' campaigns or the increased criminalisation of people with backgrounds of poverty, abuse, mental illness and Indigenous people. In that sense, the organisation has always been beyond politics, beyond factionalism. Its heart is the people it works for—the women and their

children. We truly believe it is the only way to achieve change. But it is also what intimidates and terrifies governments and what has exercised the minds of politicians recently.

Despite operating on this basis for 14 years, with success—I was personally awarded an Order of Australia Medal several years ago, awarded the national Human Rights Medal and Sisters Inside was named best community organisation in Australia. Despite that, the current Minister of Police and Prisons in Queensland believes that our management structure is unsuitable. Women who are living the experience should have no voice. That it cannot in fact be allowed to operate—silence them.

Despite the fact this model is lauded as the best in the world by people like Professor Angela Davis, herself an iconic leader for decades in the fight for justice and an ardent supporter of Sisters Inside. Despite the fact that organisations like Sisters Inside keep women out of prison—by supporting them, helping them rebuild their lives when they emerge, to find homes, get their children back, get training and employment, and find a home.

This is the same Minister, mind you, who recently boasted about how well policed we are, particularly how well policed Indigenous people are: one police officer to 440 people in the broader community and one to 120 people in Indigenous communities. Four times more! And she was boasting about that! To me this it is nothing more than structural racism.

These days, when we reply to such statements or object to certain government actions or inactions, it doesn't go unnoticed. Up until two years ago the worst we suffered for that was a backlash in the media, or a summons to a high-level meeting. That all changed two years ago after Sisters Inside lodged a formal complaint against the Queensland Government about the abuse of human rights and discrimination of women in Queensland prisons.

The report back from the anti-discrimination commission vindicated, we believe, everything we stand for as an organisation. It urges the State Government to address such issues as mandatory strip searching, the shocking effects on the children of incarcerated mothers, the terrible plight of women with mental illness and the systemic discrimination Indigenous women experience in Queensland prisons daily. And the ludicrous claims made on behalf of prisons by those who build and run them. That is, that they work! That women who commit crimes need to be locked up, de-humanised, degraded, further deprived; that they will be made into better people inside prison, that they will emerge better equipped with training and work experience and rehabilitated.

The statements we, as an organisation, have made following that report have seen us locked out of Queensland prisons—myself personally, and the management committee—and the curtailing of many of our services. This has been devastating for us and for me personally, and for the women inside who are now largely without any voice at all.

And you know as well as I do that these are women who have been silenced and marginalised by life before prison. The truth is that prison repeats all the experience of violence, abuse and deprivation and humiliation that most women who go inside have experienced their whole lives. In fact, to the great majority of women in prison, the term human right is a contradiction. Their human rights have been compromised well before they hit the criminal injustice system.

Prior to going to prison, 98% of women have experienced physical abuse. 89% have experienced sexual abuse or assault. A great many of them have experienced poverty, in families that are abusive, in which they are not valued. The effects of poverty and abuse mean most have a low level of education, low levels of self-esteem and few skills. The attempts that many make to self-medicate, to deal with the pain of life, mean a great proportion have addictions to drugs and/or alcohol. Their health is characteristically poor, and many have mental health issues which have not been addressed.

In the past two years we have seen abundant and heart-breaking evidence of that. Prisons have become the de facto psychiatric institutions of our communities, where behaviours are not treated but punished, where people are not just chemically restrained but physically restrained and abused. Prisons are where we hide the homeless.

A high proportion of incarcerated women are, of course, Indigenous. In this State alone, Indigenous women make up 30% of the women's prison population. And for them, all of those things are multiplied. Multiplied, exacerbated, and getting worse all the time. Some are from culturally diverse backgrounds, and for them those things are also multiplied.

So when we at Sisters Inside talk about the human rights of women in prison, we are talking about a very delicate thing. It's a notion most of these women have given up on. Human rights are things other people have. Life—and the experience of being a prisoner—does that to you.

That is why I find it interesting that in the media recently the Minister and Director-General here in Queensland—among others in other jurisdictions—have been busy trying to tell us that prisons in our society are akin to five-star hotels: hotels where prisoners get it easy in air-conditioned comfort, spend their days lazing around the tennis court, in gyms and libraries, their hours taken up by carefree hobbies and comforting therapies. They're so successful that they're planning more of these so called resort-style complexes—one here in north Queensland, in Townsville, one in the ACT, the new recently opened prison for women in Tasmania, and let's not forget the 4,000-cell prison to be built in outer Brisbane.

No prizes for guessing the people who will be filling them up. Given that there has always been one rule for Aboriginal people and another rule for the police, as we've seen so graphically recently on Palm Island: the despair of the community over the tragedy of Murindji, killed in custody two years ago, while the police officer responsible has still not been charged and removed himself from duty by community outrage—still on full pay, I must add. And let's not forget that the Minister did not remove him from duties.

That up against the case of a young woman recently whose young child slipped in the shower: the mother was charged with not providing the necessities of life because she didn't call an ambulance or seek medical advice, then 24 hours later charged with manslaughter of her little baby girl. Again, one rule for Aboriginal people, another for the cops.

And unless we address the fundamental racism and discrimination inherent in our society, this will not change and we will continue to see the overt and covert criminalisation of Aboriginal women, men and children. This is our problem, the problem of non-Indigenous Australia.

Ours is a society that has always been uneasy with its colonial past and the decimation it caused among the first peoples of this land. Yet it is also a society that claims to champion the underdog. It is an extraordinary irony that, while we claim to be on the side of the battler, we are also busy keeping the battler, the underdog, the underclass, in their place. Because if those people are allowed to move out of that place of disadvantage and deprivation, what becomes of the rest of us? The white privilege. What happens to our place, the rung on the ladder we've fought so hard for? The white ladder.

Prisons fit neatly into this scheme of thinking. Prisons underscore the social, political, economic and judicial system that we have all created to keep our own white advantaged heads above water. They ensure there is always someone to blame. They ensure there is always someone punished—on behalf of us all.

I believe that we, the advantaged, the privileged, are kept in our safe places by the very fact that others are carrying our collective blame for the ills of society and of the whole world. Most people who suspect this do what they can to forget they know it. They do this by various methods: we make these others invisible—and prisons are just one way of doing this. And we do it with words, by labelling them: we call them 'bad', 'mad'; we call them 'lazy', 'weak' or 'violent'. In this way we make them less than human. In this way we can all get out of bed in the mornings and face our days without weeping. Well, some of us.

Inside prisons, this is taken a step further. A woman inside prison is no longer someone's daughter, wife, mother, nan, girlfriend, employee or boss. She has no particular history except a prison or criminal history. There is no such classification as bag-snatcher but good mother; or drug dealer but fantastic businesswoman/chef/storyteller; or prostitute but loyal carer of disabled son or grandmother. To concede qualities other than the bad ones would be to risk treating such women as human beings with human rights.

In prison, you are your crime. They make a shape for you and mould you to it. And that's just the informal classification system. What about the formal classification system—let's talk about [that].

These issues form just a part of the discrimination and human rights complaint Sisters Inside took to the anti-discrimination commission two years ago, and for which we are now being punished. The real reason we are being punished is that prisons don't work, and we keep pointing that out. We will keep pointing that out. Just as you all will keep pointing out how important it is to stop family violence and how important your work is for Indigenous women and children and families in the communities you live and work.

We must have the courage and tenacity to challenge the continued creation of laws and policies that effectively criminalise poverty, mental disabilities and Aboriginality. We must challenge the classification, assessment and correctional tools that pretend that the individual members of those very groups of people who are grabbed, sucked or thrown into the criminal and correctional systems are there because of their planned, voluntary and criminally intended actions.

What do we do instead? In the United Kingdom noted policy leaders are calling for decarceration and social reinvestment. In the United States, some have been calling for the abolition of juvenile prison for a long time, and those same voices are now calling for penal abolition. In Canada, CAFES continues its advocacy and legal challenges for decarceration of Indigenous women and abolition.

In the United States, too, Angela Davis continues to influence debate with her argument and writing, most recently her book, *Are prisons obsolete?* Angela has characterised the push to criminalise the most dispossessed as akin to the system of slavery that dehumanised America for so long. When people began to talk about the abolition of slavery, they were met with cries of horror and fears of anarchy and violence. Similarly, with notions of the abolition of prisons.

We have to demystify this debate. Let's look at the reality of prisons: we imprison women and girls for the behaviours they have adopted to survive poverty, abuse, colonisation, racism and disabilities. We tell them they must stop this. We lock them up and repeat the abuse they have suffered all their lives. We tell them what bad women they are and that, despite their lack of options—no income, no housing, no medical, educational or often family support—they must reform themselves. Then we release them to the street with little or no support, drug rehab, no skills to rebuild their lives, no money to even pay a bond, fill a fridge with food—let alone survive until they can get a job, get their kids back. We tell them they are in charge of their destinies. What a joke.

But what if we took a different tack? What if we provided everyone with enough resources, economic and social, so that every child truly had an equal chance of prospering? If we provided a good base-level of care for everyone and a safety net that truly did stop people, particularly children, from falling through the cracks. What if every child had access to high quality education and was supported to access it and to access employment opportunities and a decent standard of living? What if every instance of child abuse or potential abuse was caught and stopped before it flowered into that child's nightmare throughout their lives? What if there was a sudden and national acknowledgment of inherent racism in this country and its terrible effects and a true and real effort to make amends? What if white Australia could walk their talk

when they say ‘sorry’ to Indigenous peoples in this country and match the word ‘sorry’ with real action?

It’s easy for governments to wax lyrical about these issues. The reality is that the human beings who are the real end result of racism and child abuse and family violence in our communities are the human beings filling up our prisons. Despite claims to the contrary, the great majority of women in our prisons are in there for non-violent offences. They do not need to be there and we as a community do not need them to be there. Their children do not need them to be there.

There are many options—long-term ones as I’ve already mentioned. A more equitable society: one in which every new baby truly has an equal chance and equal opportunities.

Your organisations are part of this process to stop women being criminalised and imprisoned. Your support and commitment to Indigenous women and their children and families show you walk with them and this will ensure that less Indigenous women are criminalised.

None of these options is impossible. None of them are dreams. But they will remain so while we insist on the current system of selective retribution and blame, while we insist that some will have and some will not have.

In the meantime, I will, and Sisters Inside will and, I am sure, you will, continue to speak out, to raise, to provoke, to invite people to consider a world in which not only prisons but poverty and prejudice and racism and deprivation and violence are abolished. A world in which all people experience freedom from discrimination and want as basic human rights. A world, in fact, in which those two words mean something to everyone.

In closing, I would like to leave you with the words of a beautiful Aboriginal woman from Brisbane: Lilla Watson:

If you have come here to help me,
You are wasting your time...
But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine,
Then let us work together.

Living with crocodiles: Healing Centre, Pormpuraaw

Presenters: Susie Holroyd and Kurt Noble

Facilities in Pormpuraaw include a council, a school, police station, a clinic, a hall, a store, CDEP, a Business Centre, an Arts and Culture Centre, a church, a library, a Centrelink office, a Macair agent, a post office, a Local Justice Centre, a Housing and Community Care Centre and the Pormpur Paanth Aboriginal Corporation (Women's Centre).

Local service providers are the Pormpur Paanth Aboriginal Corporation, the Pormpuraaw Aboriginal Shire Council, Queensland Health (Clinic), Queensland Education (State Primary School), Queensland Police Service (Community Police) and Queensland Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy (DATSIP), which manages the community store.

Susie Holroyd was born in Cairns and raised in Pormpuraaw. She is the daughter of Aboriginal parents: her father came from Christmas Creek just north of Pormpuraaw and mother came from Top Kendall River between Pormpuraaw and Aurukun. Susie attended Woodley College as a boarder from Grades 8–12 before returning to her home in Pormpuraaw. Susie has held various positions, including:

- Pormpuraaw Shire councillor
- child-safety committee member in her community
- Recognised Entity Committee member
- Community Justice Group member
- founding member of the Developing Health Action Group, and
- elected representative for the Cape York Family Violence Prevention Legal Unit Board.

Kurt Noble was born and raised in Cairns. He identifies as an Idinji man and is of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent. After completing Year 10 in high school, he spent approximately 30 years working in a wide range of areas including engineering, teaching, Indigenous education, corrections, dispute resolution, native title, cultural awareness, suicide prevention, youth justice and restorative justice. Kurt is now the manager of the Pormpur Paanth Aboriginal Corporation

The Pormpur Paanth Aboriginal Corporation's primary focus is on family violence and experiences of how both local and outreach services impact upon remote communities. It provides child care services, child safety services, a women's shelter, and various capacity-building and wellbeing programs.

The corporation established the Pormpuraaw Healing Centre in 2004 and is well on the way to establishing the first residential alcohol rehabilitation centre in Cape York. The Healing Centre is managed by the committee of the Pormpur Paanth Aboriginal Corporation. This committee comprises members of the local community council, the

health clinic, the community school, community police, and four cultural advisers (two from each local clan group).

The Healing Centre delivers:

- a Family Wellbeing Program for men, women, youth and elders in collaboration with both local and outreach services
- a counselling service for residents of Pormpuraaw and Kowanyama (a neighbouring Aboriginal community). This service is coordinated in partnership with the Kowanyama Aboriginal Council, the Royal Flying Doctor Service and the Child and Youth Mental Health Service.
- referrals to the Local Justice Group, police, courts and clinics, and council and outreach services such as health services, Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Services, psychology services, the Queensland Department of Corrective Services and Youth Justice Service Centres.

Thursday Island State School

Presenters: Gabrielle Bani and Stephanie Savage

Stephanie Savage is the Principal of Thursday Island State School in the Torres Strait. She has been an educator for 21 years and has spent 17½ years in the Torres Strait. She is a proud Torres Strait Islander woman and considers herself to be privileged to be in a position where she is able to make a difference to the lives of children.

Gabrielle Bani is currently the Chairperson of Thursday Island State School and is also the former President of the school's Parents' and Citizens' Association. In these roles, Gabrielle has been involved with the strategic planning for both the school and the education system in the Torres Strait Islands. He has worked for 20 years in Queensland Health in the areas of family support, mental health, social work, alcohol and drugs, and health promotion. He is also the Director of Bani Consultancy, which provides services related to:

- cultural awareness and education
- cultural protocols and orientation
- language translation and interpretation
- training in counselling support and advice
- facilitation, and
- workshops and teaching methods.

This presentation is available on disc upon request to the FVPLS Section.

Issues and solutions

This conference session required participants to work together in small groups to identify issues and suggest solutions for the Department's consideration.

Issues identified	Suggested solutions
FVPLS units: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Auspice/management/incorporation - Working outside Operational Framework - Poor relationships with auspice bodies - Lack of funding for emergency relief - Annual funding inadequate - Access to resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clarification of roles - One governance model - Triennial funding - Continuity and consistency of services and programs - Department to fund one FVPLS unit to create a national database -
Remote areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of relevant services - Isolation - Staff recruitment and retention (including solicitors) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Separate domestic violence worker - Cooperation and information sharing between FVPLS units - Train local community members in areas such as health clinics, education and counselling - Tailor programs to meet each individual area's needs - Night patrol - Legislative authority to formally take perpetrator/known offender into community (not permits as is currently the case) - Introduction of mandatory reporting - Work placement scheme (between current services) - Increase funding for relocation, accommodation, extra leave, professional indemnity insurance, etc - Seek university graduates
Men's issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shortage of male workers - No support services for men - No programs for men - No men's safe houses or healing centres - No men's perpetrator/prevention programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local men's programs, including counselling which are managed and operated by men - Aboriginal visitors' scheme (aimed at both perpetrators and victims)

Issues identified	Suggested solutions
<p>Safe houses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of funding - Department of Community Services (DOCS) legislation prevents women and children from using the safe house - Police and staff mandatory informers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interagency support for staff and management - Staff training and development - Develop mechanisms to monitor DOCS staff performance - Healing Centre programs to deal with issues such as intergenerational trauma
<p>Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Literacy and numeracy - Truancy - Children leaving school at an early age - Child protection legislation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Truancy officer at every school - Reward the children who do attend school regularly (eg football academy) - Staff training
<p>Governments and services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Health - Housing - Unemployment - Lack of cultural sensitivity in urban areas towards women and children when they utilise services - Lack of cultural awareness with judges, magistrates, court staff and police - Inadequate support from local government and service providers - Current mandatory reporting methods inadequate - Limited police protection - Border issues - Access to education facilities and schools-awareness programs - National campaign - Too many short-term solutions - Limited police aides/liaison officers - No funding for outreach - Victims of crime: inadequate compensation in Victoria - Lack of emergency housing - Local government dollars spent on insignificant items instead of rehabilitation services, women's shelters, mental health services, ATODS, physical health problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lobby governments in a collaborative manner - More collaborative approach between services - Consistency with other government agencies' funding modules - Communities working together

Participants suggested that the next national Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Conference could be improved by:

- extending question-and-answer sessions
- allocating more time for each session, particularly financial management
- staff from FVPLS units introducing themselves on the first day
- neighbouring States hosting their own smaller conference sessions in a lead-up to the national conference. This would facilitate the discussion of various issues that could be brought to the national conference on behalf of the collective
- providing more information on how co-located FVPLS units and FRCs work cooperatively, and
- making sure that presenters forward their presentations to Departmental staff well before the conference so that arrangements can be made to ensure the appropriate technology is available.

Conclusion

The facilitators, Dallas Young and Waverley Stanley, thanked the Attorney-General's Department for hosting the conference and thanked all participants for their contributions. In their opinion, the conference was a great success and provided participants with a wonderful opportunity to share ideas on good practice and successful program initiatives.

Margaret Beattie thanked the facilitators and the participants for taking time out of their busy schedules to attend the conference. Margaret also thanked Departmental staff for their assistance. Margaret wished everyone a safe journey home and looked forward to catching up with everyone again next year.

Appendix A: Conference agenda

FVPLS NATIONAL CONFERENCE 29–31 OCTOBER 2006 AGENDA

HILTON, CAIRNS

Facilitators
Waverley Stanley
Dallas Young

Sunday 29 October 2006

- 4:00 Arrival and Registration – Rhonda Woodward and Catherine Wright
- 6:00 BBQ – Entertainment: Danny Benjamin

Monday 30 October 2006

- 8:30 Acknowledgment to Country
- 8:45 General Welcome, housekeeping and instructions – Facilitators
- 9:00 Welcome from the Attorney-General’s Department – Margaret Beattie,
Department FVPLS Program Director
- 9:15 Tom Calma, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice
Commissioner
- 9:45 Questions and Answers – Tom Calma
- 10:00 Morning tea
- 10:30 Showcase East/West Cape York Family Violence Prevention Legal
Service Aboriginal Corporation
- 11:00 Healing Centre and Rehabilitation Centre, Cape York Presentation –
Kurt Noble and Susie Holroyd
- 11:50 Mildura FVPLS unit advertising campaign – Maureen Smith
- 12:00 Lunch
- 2:30 Department Family Law System – FRCs and FLC

- 4:30 Family Relationship Programs including Indigenous Family Violence Programs – Robyn Fleming, Branch Manager, Family Relationship Services (FaCSIA)
- 4:55 Voluntary visit to East and West Cape York Family Violence Prevention Legal Unit Aboriginal Corporation
- 6:00 Dinner (individual travel allowance)

Tuesday 31 October 2006

- 9:00 Inspirational speakers – Stephanie Savage and Gabrielle Bani
- 10:00 Morning tea
- 10:30 5th Healing Our Spirit Worldwide conference (Edmonton) Presentation – FVPLS representatives: Brian Healey, Rhonda Solien
- 7th World Indigenous Women & Wellness conference (Vancouver) Presentation – FVPLS representatives: Antoinette Braybrook and Kim O’Hello
- 12:00 Lunch
- 1:00 Department-accredited sexual assault training – Rosemary Wanganeen, Yarrow Place Trainer and Rhonda Woodward, Department Counsellor
- 1:30 Accounting Training for Non-Accountants, CPA Workshops – Debbie Richards, Department FVPLS Assistant Director
- 2:00 Overview Financial Management – Glenn Phillips, Department FVPLS Assistant Director
- 2:30 Afternoon tea
- 3:00 Fitzroy Crossing Bush Meeting Presentation and Marninwarntikura Family Violence Prevention Unit – Christine Gray, Counsellor and Jodie Bell, Chairperson
- 3:30 Training agenda for remainder 2006–07 and 2007–08 – Margaret Beattie, Department FVPLS Program Director
- 4:00 Conference wrap-up – Facilitators
Instructions for Training Day (Wednesday 1 November – Debbie Richards)
- 4:30 Closing

6:00 Dinner
 Guest speaker – Debbie Kilroy, Chairperson of Sisters Inside

29 to 31 October 2006, National conference Department staff in attendance:

Margaret Beattie, Program Director
Debbie Richards, Assistant Director – West Team
Glenn Phillips, Assistant Director – East Team
Catherine Wright, Scribe
Sacheen Deemal, Scribe
Rhonda Woodward, Counsellor
Troy Robinson, Admin support
Mark Champion, Admin support

1st November, Training Day Department FVPLS staff in attendance:

Margaret Beattie, Program Director
Catherine Wright, Program Officer
Debbie Richards, Assistant Director
Rhonda Woodward, Program Officer