J Block Women of Art Project Report: Evaluating Community Education in a Prison Setting

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to thank the women of J Block for participating in the evaluation. Thanks also to the Northern Territory Correctional Services staff at all levels who supported and participated in the evaluation. Dawn House and Ruby Gaea staff offered guidance and support throughout the evaluation process.

Many photos included in this report show the work produced by the women in J Block.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation documents whether women who attend the J Block Women of Art Project have their needs met regarding domestic/family violence and sexual assault (D&FV/SA) education and information. This evaluation investigated:

- the safe environment for the discussion of domestic violence and family violence;
- if and how one to one consultations are appropriate;
- how information on domestic and family violence is given and received;
- if women know about domestic and family violence support services;
- whether women can safely express choices, ideas, opinions and attitudes;
- how women direct their own activities;
- how women experience being in the group, interacting with the workers and other women.

Since November 2003, staff members from Dawn House Inc. have visited the Darwin Correctional Centre on a weekly basis to run informal art and craft sessions with women prisoners. Ruby Gaea joined in providing services to J Block prisoners in 2004. Dawn House and Ruby Gaea formalised the co-facilitation of J Block women of art project in 2007 with a Memorandum of Understanding.

This evaluation used qualitative research methods to answer the research objectives and expected project outcomes. The research design aligns with feminist research principles about including and reflecting on a range of views from a number of perspectives during the research process. Published literature, internal documents, participation and observation of sessions, interviews, group talking and feedback generated the data and findings. Ethical consent for this research was provided by the Menzies School of Health Research Human Ethics Committee. Particular processes were used to ensure the safety of the women prisoners during the research.

Eleven employed staff and eighteen female prisoners participated in the research. There was a transition between staff at both Dawn House and Ruby Gaea during this evaluation. The
Community Educator positions changed as well as other core staff and this meant the project was in a state of flux during the evaluation. Therefore, a complete overview of what occurred in the past few years was incomplete.

The published literature suggests that women prisoners are a minority group who experience high levels of abuse and victimisation prior to incarceration, and continue to be discriminated against within a male majority. Indigenous women form a growing jail population and many have mental health problems in association with experiences of violence. Indigenous women are disadvantaged on multiple levels due to sexism and racism. There are examples of best practice available in forming reformatory, healing and progressive interventions with Indigenous prisoners and some jurisdictions in Australia have made special provisions. Furthermore, there are now recommendations that Indigenous people develop and deliver interventions – not just receive them passively. Art activities such as theatre, poetry, creative writing and painting have been commonly used in jail settings for vocational, educational and therapeutic reasons and are often reported positively. Providing interventions inside jails is complex in that there are tensions between various agendas and the authoritarian and punishing aspects of corrections is always present.

The findings were that few internal documents were available for the evaluation process; there was no mention of increasing prisoner’s understanding of Domestic & Family Violence/Sexual Assault in the strategic plan (although this is clearly a major goal); that under current staffing and time restraints provision of ongoing counselling is not possible; that women valued the interaction with project workers and brief counselling; that the activities provided in J Block are popular, productive and inclusive; women identified more activities that they would like to do; that advocacy and community development are complex activities inside a prison and require skilful negotiation and communication strategies; that prison staff often had no special training on working with survivors of violence and sexual assault and would appreciate these skills; and that regular reporting to senior prison officers about activities and goals would be valuable.
RECOMMENDATIONS:

- This project needs more staff hours and organisational resources if it is to develop into a dynamic Domestic & Family Violence/Sexual Assault (now referred to as D&FV/SA) community education project.
- Regular documentation to be maintained by the designated worker/s of the numbers of women attending, types of activities and issues arising so a continuous record is maintained. This would be beneficial to future workers, management, and to any other evaluation process.
- Creative activities to continue and women’s requests for a range of activities and to be implemented (as per budget)
- As the majority of prisoners are overwhelmingly Indigenous Australians, a commitment needs to be maintained to provision of culturally appropriate art/craft materials and techniques
- Project Workers to continue to listen and validate women’s concerns about incarceration
- Indirect and direct approaches to discussing and working with D&FV/SA to be maintained as part of the project’s regular activity.
- All information and educational materials regarding violence against women and children and women’s mental health to be collated and approved for general viewing in J Block by all women.

- In order to reflect the constituents of J Block, culturally and linguistically appropriate information and education materials to be provided which reflect the constituents of J Block
- Women value individual sessions and ways to meet this need should be identified.
- Dawn House and Ruby Gaea to share their skills in D&FV/SA with prison employees.
- Regular discussions with senior officers and corrections administrators need to occur to clarify activities, achievements and identify problems.
BACKGROUND TO EVALUATION

Purpose:

This evaluation documents whether women who attend the J Block Women of Art Project have their needs met regarding domestic/family violence and sexual assault (D&FV/SA) education and information. This is a funded evaluation informed by feminist research principles. Respondents included the women who attend the weekly sessions, the project workers, prison officers and other prison staff, staff from Dawn House and Ruby Gaea. The evaluation determined whether women who attend the J Block Women of Art project believe that the sessions are valuable and what they think are the outcomes of the project. The evaluation also determined whether the project objectives are being achieved, whether there are any unintended outcomes from the project, the strengths and weaknesses of the project and what if any, are the barriers to meeting the project objectives. The evaluation provides recommendations for building on the strengths and addressing weaknesses of the project.

This evaluation investigated:

• the safe environment for the discussion of domestic violence and family violence;
• if and how one to one consultations are appropriate;
• how information on domestic and family violence is given and received;
• if women know about domestic and family violence support services;
• whether women can safely express choices, ideas, opinions and attitudes;
• how women direct their own activities;
• how women experience being in the group, interacting with the workers and other women.

The outcome of this evaluation does not directly influence funding for this project and there is no specific reporting mechanism required by the funding body.
History of J Block Women of Art Project

Dawn House Inc.
Since November 2003, staff members from Dawn House Inc. have visited the Darwin Correctional Centre on a weekly basis to run informal art and craft sessions with women prisoners. Dawn House Inc. provides services in three distinct programs areas:

- Women’s and Children’s Shelter; case managed crisis and transitional accommodation and support for women and children escaping domestic/family violence
- Domestic Violence Counselling Service: counselling and group work for women who are currently experiencing &/or have experienced domestic violence
- Domestic Violence Community Education Program: community education and service provider training

Dawn House advocates for the rights of women and children in the Northern Territory and work practice is informed by feminist and social justice principles.

Ruby Gaea: Darwin Centre against Rape
Ruby Gaea has been operating as a women’s and children’s sexual assault counselling/advocacy and education service since mid 1987. Ruby Gaea joined in providing services to J Block prisoners in 2004. Dawn House and Ruby Gaea formalised the co-facilitation of J Block women of art project in 2007 with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU clarified roles and responsibilities of Ruby Gaea and Dawn House and detailed the scope and purpose of the project. The role and engagement by Ruby Gaea has changed over the years.

Initially, the visits to the Darwin Corrections Centre J Block were exploratory. One worker recalled the very first day:

‘The first day we went in only one woman spoke to us. It was most depressing. We went away and ate chocolate and thought about what to do next. We hadn’t been in prison before. Next week we took charcoal, paper, pencils and we put them on the table. We were nearly mobbed. They asked for painting materials and canvas. They were happy… Those three hours were like not being in prison. It was a chance for women to talk about stuff; it was useful because they could talk privately. It was fun, there was music and laughter. We rocked up by ourselves. We had no idea. If they had said lets do yoga or book reading we would have done it.’
This worker told of the prevailing attitudes inside the prison at the time where there were few resources for women prisoners and mental health was not handled well. She said,

‘The mental health assessment should have been better and referral to counselling… Some of the women were so unwell I wondered how they were sentenced to jail… A lot of women who are mentally ill were isolated in the cage\(^1\) because of poor behaviour but I thought they were behaving that way because they were ill.’

She spoke of presenting the Art Project at the *Sisters Inside* Conference in 2005 in Melbourne and had the impression that it was a unique program in Australia.

\(^1\) The ‘cage’ she refers to still exists. It is a cell with external bars where women are further confined as punishment.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Incarceration of Indigenous people

The Darwin Correctional Centre is situated in Berrimah on the outskirts of urban Darwin. During 2006-2007, 2,047 people were imprisoned in the Northern Territory and this was a 10% increase from the previous year (Northern Territory Department of Justice 2007). There are two major centres for holding prisoners, one in Alice Springs and the other in Darwin. Both are designed to hold between 400-450 prisoners; they are consistently full. On any one day 84% of the prisoners will be Indigenous. The Department of Justice (Northern Territory Department of Justice 2007:4) states:

“On 30 June 2007, there were 41 female prisoners in custody, which represented 5% of the Northern Territory prison population. During 2006-07, there were 93 sentenced female receptions, an 11% increase compared with the previous year. The average daily number of adult females in custody during 2006-07 was 36, which was higher than the previous year. The estimated Northern Territory female imprisonment rate for 2006-07 was 51 per 100,000 adult females. The estimated Australian rate for the same period was 23 per 100,000 adult females.”

This means that women are a minority in prison but an increasing one and the Northern Territory has a higher per capita percentage of female inmates than other places in Australia (Northern Territory Department of Justice 2006). Women are incarcerated for sentencing purposes, to serve a sentence or if they are on remand. The Department’s reports state that the majority of inmates are enrolled in educational programmes but this is not disaggregated by sex.

Abuse and violence against women

Violence against Australian women is common. The federal government reports that 2 in 5 women experience violence over their lifetime and 1 in 17 are victims of violence and most commonly the assailant is a partner or someone known to the woman (Commonwealth of Australia 2007). Frequently women are assaulted in their own homes by the men they know. Violence against women can lead to homicide and in Australia a quarter of murders are due to an intimate partner killing, usually the man being the perpetrator, most often the women are beaten to death (David 2007). In these specific cases, almost half of the victims had a history of
reported domestic violence (Commonwealth of Australia 2007). Indigenous women are at risk of family based violence and experience high levels of morbidity and distress (Al-Yaman, Van-Doeland et al. 2006).

Most women within the prison system in Australia and internationally where data is available have experienced violence and other forms of disempowerment. The literature also supports the view that there are very high rates of a history of victimisation by abuse and violence in women who are incarcerated (Rodriguez, Mendoza et al. 2006; Tye and Mullen 2006; Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service and Poroch 2007). A 2001 study of female prisoners in Western Australia reports a history of past abuse in 77% of their population (Department of Corrective Services Undated). Female prisoners are always a minority group within correctional services and have special psycho-social needs (Lewis 2006). Moreover some of these women experience on-going mental health problems and have had contact with mental health services. Much of the literature also points to the lack of healing services, transition programs and high rates of recidivism for female prisoners. Internationally and in Australia, there is a complex interplay of gender, race and poverty which contribute to increasing rates of black women spending time locked up (Sudbury 2005). There is scant information about what works from prisoners’ perspectives and prison authorities may be reluctant to invest in projects that have not demonstrated results in formal ways.

**Specific projects or programs for women - educational, vocational, rehabilitation and healing**

Much of the criminology literature is gender blind, and the offender is assumed to be male (Naffine 1997; Lewis 2006). It documents programs for inmates covering education and vocation training, sexual deviance and sex offender treatment, aggressive and violent behaviour management and drug and alcohol rehabilitation. There is also some literature which deals with Indigenous criminology and programs designed by aboriginal people with specific cultural content, messages and activities which address not only mental and physical issues but spiritual issues (Fitzgerald, Manners et al. 1999; Ridgway, Yatala Labour Prison et al. 2001).

Regarding programs for women inside prison the recent report titled *You Do the Crime You Do the Time* found that transgenerational trauma was high and recommended the following:

> Early intervention with Aboriginal women in the areas of education and employment,
treatment for sexual and physical abuse, mental health, and alcohol and drug abuse problems would reduce contact with the criminal justice system. Aboriginal women should also be involved in developing and delivering government programs.' (Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service and Poroch 2007:xvii)

Women prisoners have higher rates of mental health and substance abuse issues than male prisoners (Farrell, Boys et al. 2006; Bogdanic 2007; Grella and Greenwell 2007; Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service and Poroch 2007) and because they are a minority they have inadequate facilities, and less access to the diversity of programs while incarcerated. The Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service report lays out clearly a model for holistic health care for Indigenous prisoners as a best practice in Australia.

The Social Justice Report 2004 (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2005) notes that there are no specific post-release programs specifically for Indigenous women in the Northern Territory but there is a ‘Reintegration After Prison Program’ for the general population which does link with Aboriginal Legal Services and other charity and mainstream community services. The authors state that Indigenous women form the ‘fastest growing prison population’ (p15), data is rarely disaggregated, recidivism is higher than for other groups and there is no policy which identifies the needs of Indigenous women. They make special note of violence against women:

‘…the consequences of family violence in Indigenous communities, and its impact on Indigenous women, have not been grappled with appropriately by the criminal justice system. The criminal justice system is extremely poor at dealing with the underlying causes of criminal behaviours and makes a negligible contribution to addressing the consequence of crime in the community. Policies and programs provide relatively little attention to the high rate of Indigenous victimisation, particularly through violence and abuse in communities. Indigenous women disproportionately bear the consequences of this.’(Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2005:21)

Western Australia has specific programs and responses for women in prison (Department of Corrective Services Undated). An information sheet (see Appendix F) produced by the Department has developed a guiding philosophy to assist with providing services to women and they suggest that women need different solutions. They also have developed a strategic plan
specifically for Indigenous women which includes mental health care, providing access to information and media in Aboriginal languages, implementing a prisoner grievance procedure that is sensitive to gender and culture, and pat down searches performed only by female officers. The authors were unable to find any similar literature for the Northern Territory Department of Justice that would suggest that women or Indigenous women require this type of intervention.

Art and education in jail

The arts and crafts and story telling as important in the journey to health and healing are often used in prison contexts or with ex-prisoners. Using art as a focus for communication, healing or simply recreation within correctional facilities is reported positively and is often represented as therapeutic or transformative (Wilson 1992; Tudor 2003; Hourani 2006; McKean 2006; Neustatter 2006). Maeve (Maeve 2000) speaks of her experiences in reading and writing poetry with American women inmates. She gives examples of graphic accounts of victimization and sexual abuse that have been transformed into poetry, thereby allowing the women to express and understand what has happened to them, as well as improving their literacy. She says that discussing the poems with the women was therapeutic. Narrative therapy, where women ‘re-author’ their lives has similar concepts (White 2007). Not only is art fun and therapeutic it can generate post-release income. Indigenous art forms such as literature, music, visual arts and crafts and performing arts are highly valued and promoted by the Northern Territory Government for business, tourism, and cultural reasons and are often exported globally (Northern Territory Government 2007). There are real employment opportunities and stories of success in the field of Aboriginal art across Australia.

There were attempts in the past in the Northern Territory to offer skills in artwork. An accredited training in Certificate II in Art and Craft\(^2\) was available at both Darwin and Alice Springs Correctional Centres. It was called 'Ending Offending-Our Message', and was a collaborative initiative between the Prisoner Education Unit and the Prisoner Rehabilitation Program Unit that involved inmates of Northern Territory Correctional and Detention Centres (Fitzgerald, Manners et al. 1999). Women participated in various subjects including copyright law, video, sculpture, business practice, marketing, exhibition practice, and painting. The focus of the course was to equip individuals with skills to become full-time professional artists. And further, the project

\(^2\) [http://www.ourmessage.org/justice/ourmessage/frameset.html](http://www.ourmessage.org/justice/ourmessage/frameset.html)
addressed issues of alcohol and drug misuse and offending behaviour through Vocational Education and Training, and therapeutic programs.

In Tasmania, the Sexual Assault Support Service\(^3\) (SASS) has successfully gained community based grants and offers sessions and projects on art and health education/intervention to women. SASS offers a TAFE and SASS Literacy Program, Women Creating New Stories of Their Lives, Learning the Art of Play, and Women in Prison Health, Art and Education projects in Mary Hutchison Women’s Prison. The Women in Prison Health, Art and Education Project, which will be implemented over three years, sounds most similar to the Block J Women of Art project implemented by Dawn House. The aims of this project are to offer female prisoners a range of learning opportunities, as well as having other service providers attend a range of activities. The project has organised forums where outside services are represented. These forums provide opportunities for women to meet service providers and gain information about a number of issues. They find that women often request counselling sessions while in prison and often upon release.

Counselling, the intensive one to one interaction of a therapist with an individual and community development, an empowerment and mobilising process, which includes a variety of activities with groups; have entirely different histories, philosophies and approaches. Counselling and community development do not have to be dichotomous activities as Jackson made a case of describing a continuum whereby individuals move from casework to social action (Jackson, Mitchell et al. 1998). Previous work in the areas of domestic and family violence indicates that traditional support group methods are commonly ineffective in these circumstances, while a community development approach within a feminist framework has increased levels of success (Wenckus 1994).

Prison context

There is a tension within correctional services in that they are required to ‘punish’ the offender while simultaneously reform (Foucault 1979) and provide social order (Cardi 2007). The idea of work or employment in prison is well accepted with notions of recreation and education being incorporated later. More contemporary ideas assume that personal reform or even therapy is possible within prisons (Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service and Poroch 2007). Furthermore, it is important that inmates demonstrate engaging in reformatory or educational

\(^3\) http://www.sass.org.au/html/contact_us.htm
programs in order to gain privileges and access parole (Anti Discrimination Commission Queensland Online). Some authors describe innovative healing programs for Indigenous women leaving prison in Canada\(^4\) and New Zealand which show that connecting spiritual, emotional and physical needs are essential elements as well as recognising interconnections between disadvantage, racism, dispossession of land and disconnection with culture, families and communities (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2005).

While these types of activities are reported as beneficial, the culture of prison is described as one of mistrust, where the prisoners frequently feel guilt, shame, and little self-respect. There is often a culture of sexism and racism that needs to be actively worked against according to (Lucashenko and Kilroy 2005). For example, strip-searches are reported as humiliating and degrading experiences especially by women who have been sexually abused in the past. A thesis (Bogdanic 2007:viii) found that ‘strip-searches may be an inappropriate security and contraband control strategy for female prisoners, and that they may have significantly negative psychological impacts on women. It was concluded that strip-searching is a form of state-sanctioned violence that is similar to sexual assault and one that negatively impacts women’s psychological well-being.’

**Summary**

The literature reviewed here suggests that women prisoners are a minority group who experience high levels of abuse and victimisation prior to incarceration, and continue to be discriminated against within a male majority. Indigenous women form a growing jail population and many have mental health problems in association with experiences of violence. Indigenous women are disadvantaged on multiple levels due to sexism and racism. There are examples of best practice available in forming reformative, healing and progressive interventions with Indigenous prisoners and some jurisdictions in Australia have made special provisions. Furthermore, there are now recommendations that Indigenous people develop and deliver interventions – not just receive them passively. Art activities such as theatre, poetry, creative writing and painting have been commonly used in jail settings for vocational, educational and therapeutic reasons and are often reported positively. Providing interventions inside jails is complex in that there are tensions between various agendas and the authoritarian and punishing aspects of corrections is always present.

EVALUATION METHODS

This evaluation used qualitative research methods to answer the research objectives and expected project outcomes. The research design aligns with feminist research principles about including and reflecting on a range of views from a number of perspectives during the research process. The use of multiple research methods means that the evaluation findings are based on a range of personal experience and opinion, discussed and contrasted with information from independent sources. This process of triangulation is used by qualitative researchers to overcome problems of validity and bias (Liamputtong and Ezzy 2005). The methodology comprised of four stages:

1. Evaluation Design and Literature Review
2. Data generation
3. Analysis of information and reflection
4. Report findings and recommendations

It was decided specifically not to interview women prisoners individually or use any psychological metrics. The project has been monitored but never formally evaluated.

Review of Internal Documents

The evaluator read the Dawn House Annual Report 2004/05, the Memorandum of Understanding between Dawn House and Ruby Gaea, the Dawn House Strategic Plan 2007-09 and a previous evaluation proposal.

Participants and Observations and Interviews

Seven interviews were conducted over several weeks with the project staff and prison officers. Interview guides can be found at the back of this report in appendix C. Only one interview was conducted over the telephone, all others were face-to-face in a place chosen by the participant. Only one previously employed project staff member did not respond to a request for an interview and the previous Community Educator was not able to complete her interview due to moving overseas. All other corrections and project staff who were invited to participate did so.
Table 1 Categories and numbers of participants in the evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female Prisoners</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Workers</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison Officers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison Welfare Staff</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participant-observation methods were used with the female prisoners. This meant that the evaluator was introduced as a university researcher to the group and asked for their permission to join in the activities.

**Group talking**

Two structured sessions of interactive feedback were held. The sessions were jointly facilitated by Dawn House, Ruby Gaea workers and the evaluator, to elicit the women’s experiences, ideas and suggestions. These were recorded on paper.

**Many languages**

All interviews were conducted in Australian-English. The prisoners spoke multiple languages, many from the Central Desert Region of Australia. Most spoke English and women translated for each-other if there was a communication problem.

**Limitations**

There was a transition between staff at both Dawn House and Ruby Gaea during this evaluation. The Community Educator position changed as well as other core staff and this meant the project was in a state of flux during the evaluation. Therefore, a complete overview of what occurred in the past few years was incomplete. As direct observation was used instead of individual interviews the voices of female prisoners are relatively absent. The opinions and experiences of ex-prisoners were not included as staff at Dawn House or Ruby Gaea did not have contact with them.

**Ethics**

In August 2007, permission for this evaluation was granted by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Menzies School of Health Research with a code number – 07/35 and the prison administration supported this evaluation (see Appendix E).
Consent forms were signed by all employed workers. One consent form was signed by a prisoner but all other prisoners preferred to give verbal consent during the evaluation process after they had formed a relationship with the evaluator. (See appendices A and B for samples of Plain Language Statement and Consent Form).

A special system of support and accountability had to be found for the incarcerated women. In cases of researcher misconduct or harm during the research process, people are informed of their right to complain to an ethics committee, usually in writing. As these women were particularly vulnerable, and unable to freely send mail out of prison, the Indigenous Liaison Officer, offered to ensure the women’s rights were not breached during the research process. No complaints were recorded from the women.

As the number of people interviewed in this evaluation was small and they work closely with each other, the evaluator has attempted to hide their identity and remove any signifying markers such as specific work roles.
RESULTS

Documentation

There were few documents available to the evaluation process. The Memorandum of Understanding (draft) between Dawn House and Ruby Gaea (Appendix D) was written in 2007 and notes the purpose, scope, principles and responsibilities surrounding the project. It states that the limitation of the project is that it is not a counselling service. The Dawn House Strategic Plan 2007-2010 mentions the Block J Women of Art project in goal 4 which concerns providing ‘community education and training on domestic and family violence to government and non government services and the broader community’. Actions, resources, key people, time frames and key performance indicators are outlined (see insert below). This evaluation did not view any file notes or budgets for this project and there was no continuous written historical documentation.

Table 2 Goal Four Strategic Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIONS</th>
<th>RESOURCES</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>TIMEFRAME</th>
<th>KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deliver J Block Women of Art project</td>
<td>Worker(s) Art supplies Prison clearance Transport Women prisoners DV/FV information and education materials</td>
<td>Community Education Worker Correctional Services staff</td>
<td>Weekly June 07 November 07 Ongoing while funding permits</td>
<td>Reports to MC File Notes Approval for weekly visits to prison Art generated Budget acquittal Increased understanding of DV/FV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This framework is incomplete and perhaps this is because it remains in draft form. This project is jointly implemented by two organisations and goal 4 does not reflect this, furthermore the aim of providing information on DV/FV is a foundation issue and is omitted. The evaluator suggests that adding words which include all workers, and DV/FV information and education materials, Ruby Gaea staff or other support staff, documenting the next planned review date, as well as using an increased understanding of DV/FV as a key performance indicator would improve this goal.
Staffing

The Project Workers are drawn from two organisations, Dawn House and Ruby Gaea. All are women with a commitment to ending violence against women and use feminist philosophy to achieve those ends. All have specific training and expertise in domestic violence, family violence and sexual assault. Five workers agreed to be interviewed and two more held informal discussions while carrying out their duties. They are managers, counsellors and community workers. The project is staffed by a Community Educator from Dawn House for just a few hours per week. Other workers from Ruby Gaea jointly facilitate the activities in the prison. There are no designated counselling sessions. An early Dawn House Annual Report 2004/05 mentioned the J Block project as ‘J Block Women of Art Prison Project-Community Development and Counselling’ (page 19) and at this phase of the project, it appeared to have embraced counselling as one of the activities provided.

Findings

This project is minimally staffed and does not offer formal counselling sessions. This transition away from formal counselling came about due to the concerns for women’s safety such as the lack of privacy or follow-up support after a session. Documentation of the weekly activities, numbers of women participating, and general transition and development of the project were unavailable for analysis. Some of the documentation provided was in draft format. The project has relied on an oral and institutional memory to chart its trajectory and impact.

Recommendations

1. This project needs more staff hours and organisational resources if it is to develop into a dynamic DV/FV/SA community education project.
2. Monthly notes should be kept by the designated worker of the numbers of women attending, types of activities and issues arising so a continuous record is maintained. This would be beneficial to future workers, management, and to any other evaluation process.
DOES THE PROJECT CREATE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR WOMEN INSIDE TO CREATE ART AS A MEANS OF SELF EXPRESSION?

Project workers voices

The project worker visits the prison for 2.5 hours each week and facilitates activities directed by the clients and within the bounds of funds and prison rules. Dawn House Annual Report 2004/05 (Dawn House 2006):21 notes ‘The structure of this support group is not a traditional format, which would normally be used when running other support groups. Conversations take place while we are painting, drawing, making jewellery, mosaicing, knitting or any number of other activities. This format works particularly well in a system which does not allow for disempowered women to have their voices heard, their opinions acknowledged, or to even make choices.’ The Project Workers experience was that most women could join in except those women with low self-esteem find it difficult to participate or those with severe mental health problems. If a prisoner is afraid to put herself forward or is not confident she will hold back. But a worker said, ‘The women are very talented and even if women had short attention they can participate if they want to.’

The Project Workers believed that art/craft is a medium for therapeutic interaction and reflection. One worker said, ‘It is an activity which brings women together where there is no pressure to talk and creates a relaxed environment. Women can draw on their inner strengths and contemplate, and reflect in silence with no expectations on them. Art has the ability to channel emotions into manageable places which are then externalised in the form of a creation which is tangible and an achievement. Much of the art work expresses themes of home, family and country. It is not an intrusive method to enquire about mental health states.’ Another worker said that, ‘The medium is irrelevant and it is simply a practical form of self-expression. What is important is the neuro-psycho approach to be in a different headspace, a distraction, to be grounded, that doesn’t require any intellectual or emotional connection. Art can be balancing just by doing it.’ Another worker said that being able to make something for yourself or your family to keep or share is important.

Evaluator’s Observations

The Art Project activities were observed by the evaluator over a period of 6 weeks for a total of 15 contact hours. At this point in time the project was in a state of transition and changed
facilitators (Community Educator). The evaluator joined in craft-art work, setting-up and tidying-up the activities, informal conversations with in-mates and reflections with project workers and prison officers outside of the group. Group sizes ranged from 8 to 12 women which often reflected the volume of women in Block J. Women were able to elect to come into the maximum security section from the low security section to participate. Very few women did not engage with the project activities and those women who did not engage were often agitated or medicated or confined to a punishment cell. Women freely and spontaneously decided the activity they wished to do, which at the time included beading, knitting, card making and painting on canvas or walls within the confines of maximum security. Women assisted each other with new skills, chatted, remained silent but listening to conversations, smoked cigarettes and assisted with un-packing and packing up duties. The women also requested and ordered their own art-craft supplies in a notebook. Other women preferred beading or card making and they often made necklaces, bracelets and earrings for their sisters and children at home. As they made the articles they talked about their families and how they missed their children. Project Workers sat and talked with the women. Two (and sometimes three) Project Workers carried art/craft supplies in and out of the facility each week. Project Workers facilitated activities and engaged women in conversations. Project Workers took women aside for more private conversations.

Activities only stopped for regular muster calls from the Prison Officers. Prison Officers observed the activities and Prison Welfare staff occasionally walked past and talked with inmates. Prison Officers searched the materials and requested some items like mobile phones be left outside the complex in lockers. Entry procedures and requests from officers did change over time and were not consistent, which caused confusion for the Project Workers. Another area of confusion was the process of storing and handing over art and craft works for prisoners. Prisoners are not allowed to keep products in their cells or have completed items stored with their ‘property’. The standard position was that anything that came in must go out again.

This was not the only activity that women could join. The following is a list of activities provided during the time of the evaluation:

- Parenting
- Line Dancing
- Financial Planning
- Horticulture
- Literacy
- Sport and Recreation Course
- Church services
- Cooking classes
- Art Classes (Thursday and Friday)
- Women of Art Project (Wednesday morning)

Not all women could access these programs as it depended on their prisoner status eg. ‘on remand’ or ‘awaiting sentence’ or ‘high security’. The Women of Art project is unique in that it is able to be accessed by all women, even those in the higher security are (except those isolated in ‘the cage’).

*Women prisoner’s voices*

Women were not formally interviewed but conversations occurred. This is what the women said. One unsolicited comment from a prisoner was ‘This is therapeutic. You calm right down when you do it’. Another woman wished to tell this story about her painting. ‘The women sitting around are older women. They are at a ceremony. There are young girls, about 6 or 7 years old. They are copying the dancing; they join in with the grandmothers, mother and aunties. The older women are singing. Special secret songs are sung. In the corners of the painting you can see headbands made of soft chicken down. The women have painted their bodies it represents their songs. There are no men because it is a women’s meeting. The colours mean things: red is for the earth, yellow is for the sun, orange is for the hills, with the afternoon sun on them and the grey is the ashes from the fire. The brown circle in the middle is space around which the women are gathered. This takes a long time form early afternoon to late in the evening. The women and girls stop to eat together.’

She went on to say, ‘This painting took me just two weeks. I have one picture submitted into the exhibition. I want to sell my pictures as I would like to buy a CD Walkman and get a DVD player so I have something to do in prison. In 2004 I started painting on canvas inside the prison, I watched the other girls in prison and I thought I might as well do something too. In 2004, I won a prize, money and I bought things with it. I would like to paint when I get out. Maybe I will do that. I didn’t really think about that before and maybe I could make some money.’
Another woman told this story about her work, ‘This is a dreaming about honey ants. You have to dig these out. They live in the ground around mulga trees. You have to dig away from the nest, take a shovel and dig. First come the eggs. I used to do this as a kid – the older people taught me. You eat the bottom of the ant and throw the head away. If you do it wrong they can bite you on the tongue. It makes you talk funny after. You can find ants all over – around Alice Springs, in South Australia and in Western Australia. They aren’t in the Top End because it’s tropical. The sweet ones stay in the chamber.’

These conversations were important as women wanted to talk about their home, family and land. It was important for them to be able to express their connections to country and kin. Some of the women were able to submit their art to exhibitions like *Behind the Wire* and some women stated that they wanted to sell their creations in order to earn money.

A facilitated discussion about the purpose and functioning of the Art Project occurred with a group of five women. When women were asked what they liked about the Art Project they said:

♀ chance to try something new
♀ like doing the painting
♀ like doing the beads
♀ we can make the walls look better

And when they were asked what they felt while they were doing the art work they said:

♀ We think about the art and not about our problems
♀ Your mind is on the canvas and the paint and not on everything else
♀ It breaks up the week and its something to look forward too in this main area (high security) especially for the women who are on remand
♀ It makes you feel happy and it brightens up the area

They reported wanting to try some different things in the future:

♀ Screen printing
♀ I would rather learn about things than listen to music
♀ I like the music
♀ It’s important that you come here because we don’t get to do too much here in the main section (high security).
♀ Mosaics and tile picture were good to do
♀ Tie dying was good and you could keep it in your property
♀ We did pandanus weaving for a couple of weeks but those women didn’t come back. We want them to come back.
♀ Working with ochres would be good
♀ Basket weaving
♀ Pottery
♀ Card making
♀ Leather work
Prison welfare workers voices

A welfare worker from the prison suggested that the inclusion of local materials important to Indigenous women such as seeds, pods, shells, pandanus would be more empowering.

Findings

Women enjoyed the creative activities and felt that they were in a different ‘head space’ from the normal prison routine. They actively engaged with the creative activities and produced numerous and varied pieces. They held informal discussions amongst themselves and with the Project Workers. The women articulated favoured activities and their preferences – some of which were culturally relevant to Indigenous women. The Prison Officers enabled the activities to occur.

Recommendations

3. Creative activities should continue and women’s requests for different sorts of activities and art/craft should be implemented.

4. As the majority of prisoners are overwhelmingly Indigenous Australians, culturally appropriate art/craft materials and techniques should be incorporated.
DOES THE PROJECT PROVIDE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR THE DISCUSSION OF DV/FV/SA ON A ONE TO ONE AND ON A GROUP BASIS? DOES THE PROJECT PROVIDE WOMEN WITH INFORMATION ON DV/FV/SA?

These aims will be reported on together.

Documentation

The documentation suggests that the sessions use a client-directed approach and provide an environment where women feel safe to discuss issues and experiences around domestic violence and family violence. The project welcomes all women, regardless of culture or life experiences, and allows for women with short or longer term sentences to participate. Clients do not initially identify as survivors of domestic and family violence until discussion within the group touches on aspects of the subject (Dawn House 2006).

Project Workers’ voices

The Project Workers report that the cases they dealt with in prison were highly complex and women displayed symptoms of trauma and institutionalised behaviours. The violence that was disclosed to them included physical, mental, sexual and institutional types. Many women also had diagnosed mental health problems and some were medicated.

Many of the Project Workers worried that their work was ad hoc, that they were unable to support the women as they wished and that the ‘one-off’ counselling sessions could possibly leave women in a worse condition. They wondered at times unintentional harm might be caused by the informal approach. The ability for women to care for themselves while they were in prison was difficult. For example, they were concerned that women were locked into their cells for many hours. Normally if a woman (outside prison) received counselling and the counselling triggered traumatic memories, there were specific activities that could be done help herself, like going for a walk or calling a friend. This was not possible for a prisoner. So the lack of follow-up support for women after difficult counselling sessions, like the inability to phone an inmate and check on her wellbeing, concerned the Project Workers and sometimes inhibited them from probing further and going into deeper traumatic issues with the women. They witnessed women at risk of suicide being isolated in cells in the prison and were informed by prisoners that this type of treatment is perceived by them as withholding their privileges.
The Project Workers received feedback from Prisoner Officers and Prison Welfare Staff to support their work and they reported the women benefit but despite that the Project Workers feel they could and should do more for the women.

Evaluator’s observations

As the Project is facilitated inside a prison system there are real limitations and constraints. There were pamphlets on various domestic violence and women’s services provided by the Project Workers. Prisoners sought out Project Workers for one to one talking which happened in the courtyard or in the library. Project Workers were not allowed to enter cells for security reasons and there were few spaces available for truly private conversations. Block J was designed originally for male prisoners waiting for discharge, not for female prisoners. There was one ‘interview’ room but unfortunately it was not noise proof and so other prisoners were able to hear conversations. Women could request counselling sessions from the Prison Welfare service situated in the main block outside of Block J but there were several barriers. The barriers were that Welfare staff were perceived as working in the interests of Correction Services, requests had to be written down on paper in English language and female prisoners were required by the authorities to be randomly strip-searched if they entered the main prison block where the Welfare services were situated.

Women prisoner’s voices

During the facilitated group discussions the women were less clear about the purpose of information and education regarding domestic and family violence – although they said they knew from personal experience about violence. ‘Yeah I know about violence. When there is a big fight in the family, it happens and it causes people to drink too much. That happened to me.’ Another woman said, ‘It’s important that you listen to us, especially about the prison trouble. We don’t always expect you to do something. We understand you can’t but you are neutral people to talk with about these things.’

Prison Welfare Workers voices

Two Prison Welfare Workers agreed to be interviewed – one was Indigenous. They saw their role as support, advocacy, service liaison, assisting with grievances, cultural interpreter,
counselling and case management for prisoners. Both had very different forms of training and experience and importantly no or limited training in domestic or family violence or sexual assault from the perspective of the victim (only perpetrator). They requested further in-service activities that would increase their capacity in this area. There was a hesitance to initiate conversations about domestic violence, family violence or sexual assault. They were aware that the Art Project aimed to educate and inform women about domestic abuse and family violence and also that it was an opportunity for brief counselling interventions. They liked the idea that art was the medium to be comfortable with the topic. They said the Project was good, accessible, welcoming and friendly. Women were never excluded.

One said, ‘Yes I would like to be more involved with the Art Project – it helps me to be with the women in a casual way. I know that I am identified as a prison worker. I understand that the women may think I just work for the prison but I would like to overcome this if possible and when the women are ready.’ And further, ‘Women say they are not creative, but you see them sit down and produce something and enjoying it.’

Both stated that there was more emphasis on art than the issues; more focus was needed. While art was a beneficial activity and created rapport, the issues were really important. One said, ‘I would like more purpose driven activities – the talk rounds are a good idea and group talking.

One said, ‘We can see a great need for counselling here. Its good to work with people in here because they are often clear headed, sober and don’t have so many daily pressures.’ She reported trying to organise joint case management between Ruby Gaea and SARC but if failed and she was disappointed. One suggestion was the need for ongoing counselling and a better referral process. The worker stated that in the past this had not worked well. They would like more support in this area because women could not come to services outside the prison.

Prisoner Officers’ voices

After observing it for several years the Prison Officers said it was very good. They said the women enjoyed it. They said it was the only program that was widely inclusive and suitable for most women, regardless of security rating or mental health. One officer reported seeing very few Indigenous women who would not engage with non-Indigenous workers. Both officers could remember specific cases where women who had abuse issues were assisted by this project. One said, ‘It’s fantastic. For women who have been abused it assists them to open up. The Project
seems to reach everyone— even those who have mental health issues. The officers hold back so people can talk. You see people sit back and watch and then later participate. It seems a safe space. Even talking just once can help…Maybe they don’t realise how good they are.’

Findings

Women did not talk directly about their satisfaction about DV/FV/SA information, they were aware that the Project Workers came from outside of the prison system and that they were ‘neutral’ and would listen and validate the women’s experiences especially regarding ‘prison trouble’.

There is a philosophical and practical difference between individual counselling and group community development and this was reflected by the Project Workers’ specialisations in their own fields. Some were very comfortable with individual work while others were more accomplished in group work. The women appear to need and benefit from both but the time available to meet women’s needs was highly limited. They spoke of the difficulties of working with transient populations of women within an authoritarian environment which disempowered women from making choices. They said that group work should have realistic goals, provide information, bust myths about violence against women and children, aim for empowerment, provide referrals and improve the women’s beliefs about themselves.

Recommendations

5. Project Workers should continue to listen and validate women’s concerns about incarceration.
6. Indirect and direct approaches to discussing and working with DV/FV/SA should be part of the project’s regular activity.
7. All information and educational materials regarding violence against women and children and women’s mental health should be collated and approved for general viewing in Block J by all women.

8. Culturally and linguistically appropriate information and education materials should be provide which reflect the constituents of Block J.

9. Women value individual sessions and ways to meet this need should be identified.
10. Dawn House and Ruby Gaea should share their skills in DV/FV/SA with prison employees.
DOES THE PROJECT CREATE A SAFE, NON-JUDGMENTAL SPACE WHERE WOMEN IN THE PRISON SYSTEM FEEL COMFORTABLE IN EXPRESSING FEELINGS, IDEAS AND ATTITUDES?

Evaluators observations

As already indicated the Project activities occur within the confines of a jail where individual autonomy is limited; despite this the Project Workers managed to deliver a few hours respite where women expressed themselves through art and craft activities. The group activities were held under a shelter in the maximum security section. One pool table with a cover and a couple of small tables were used. Most of the women chose to sit on the floor while doing activities but some older women requested chairs and tables. Women appeared comfortable and relaxed while participating. A salient point to mention here is that it is the Correctional Service that has the power to define safety for the women and access to services. The prison environment is not structured by the attending services and this leaves the Project Workers seeking clarifications, asking for protocols and sometimes advocating.

Women prisoners voices

As already stated the women were aware where the Project workers were from and their ‘neutrality’ in the corrections system.

Project workers voices

The Project Workers found the continual rotation of prison officers difficult when trying to communicate about processes and form professional relationships. Communication seemed to rely more on personal style than consistent processes. For example, the Project Workers want to provide education and information material to women but there is no clear mechanism for them to know how to do this in the corrections system. They stated they needed to understand the mechanisms by which they could forward complaints made by the women into the corrections system through internal processes. In the past there has been email/ telephone contact and the Project Workers said that a more formalised and regular type of communication would be positive.
Two senior Prison Officers with many years of experience agreed to be interviewed. They both supported the Art Project and wish it to continue. One said, ‘Women come in here with a big chip on their shoulder. Being in the female section you see how women are treated by their partners. We pushed for courses to happen for the women. They weren’t being offered to the women…This is important for women coming up for parole. If they can’t demonstrate addressing their problems they are disadvantaged.’ The officer identified issues such as anger management and drug and alcohol. Both officers recognised the enormity of abuse and alcohol and drug problems for women. Neither had any specific training in domestic violence or sexual assault and one had some workshops on acquired brain injury. They said their officers had no training in this area and learnt through trial and error and experience.

The officers said they would like more activities and programs but were restrained by the small numbers of women, and the size and capacity of the buildings. One said, ‘Most of us are agents of change, years ago there would have been a bit of ‘anti’ but not now.’ And further, ‘Prisoners are easier to manage if engaged.’

One comment about process was, ‘Project Workers need to run their ideas and activities past the Seniors before it happens as otherwise officers feel disrespected. An example is when prisoners wrote other prisoners names on the wall. We didn’t want this to happen. Communication is very important; it doesn’t necessarily filter down from our management to us, especially in the female section.’

The officers agreed that there should be documented protocols and an orientation for Project Workers. They noted that security management changed due to varying situations inside the prison so they could not always rely on just one process.

**Recommendations**

11. Regular discussions with senior officers and corrections administrators should occur to clarify activities, achievements and identify problems.
Summary - Strengths and weaknesses of the Block J Women of Art Project

The strengths of the J Block Women of Art Project are that it is a popular and appreciated activity by all parties in Darwin Corrections Centre at Berrimah. Women prisoners of all abilities, sentencing categories and ethnic backgrounds joined the group and participated in various ways. The art/craft focus is enjoyable, calming, engaging and appreciated by prisoners. It is different to the concurrent art group in that the focus is not vocational development rather; the focus is empowering, gender sensitive and aimed at assisting women who have experienced trauma, abuse and violence. The Project Workers are skilled and committed to their work. Prison Officers and Prison Welfare Workers value the project, enable it to occur within the jail and perceive it to be beneficial to prisoners, particularly those who have a history of DV/FV/SA. The J Block Women of Art Project has continued for over 5 years despite minimal funding and limited staff resources. The partnership between Dawn House and Ruby Gaea in running the group has been clarified and codified in writing.

The weaknesses of the project include a lack of documentation from which to draw conclusions about the progress and development of the project over time. The monitoring processes have been incomplete and the evaluator recommends addressing the questions listed below in future documentation (Box 1). As the majority of prisoners are Indigenous Australians greater emphasis should be placed on culturally appropriate activities and linking women prisoners with Indigenous organisations. The current time allocated to the project should be increased to enable the progression and improvement of this project. There is a missed opportunity to work in a developmental way with corrections staff in order to increase their skill levels and sensitivity to DV/FV/SA and its impact on female prisoners but at current staffing levels and time commitments this is not possible. While the current senior prison officers welcome and appreciate the project, some formal documentation should be negotiated with Correction Services. This would also be an opportunity to clarify the types of activities, information and procedures that are possible within the corrections system and future visions for the re-orienting of this project.
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<th>Question</th>
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<td>How many visits occur over the 12 months?</td>
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<td>How many women attend the group activities each month?</td>
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<td>What types of art/craft supplies are provided?</td>
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<td>What types of art/craft are produced?</td>
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<td>Which activities do the women initiate or request?</td>
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<td>What is the nature of the participation?</td>
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<td>How is cross-cultural and non-discriminatory practice maintained?</td>
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<td>Which pamphlets, books, DVDs are given to women or used during the community education?</td>
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<td>What types of materials are most popular and appreciated?</td>
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<td>How is DV/FV/SA knowledge increased?</td>
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<td>How is confidentiality maintained?</td>
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<td>How are women assisted to access other services?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How are women assisted to access ongoing counselling and support services related to DV/FV/SA?</td>
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Table 3 Key questions for reporting
APPENDICES:

A - Plain Language Statement

Block J Women of Art Project: a community development intervention for incarcerated women in Darwin

CHIEF INVESTIGATORS: Suzanne Belton & Lesley Barclay

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY: You are invited to assist Dawn House to evaluate the Art Project by joining in group discussions or interviews. We would like to understand how this project works, what activities happen and what it feels like to join in this project.

The community educator comes from Dawn House which is a place where they look after women and kids who have experienced domestic and family violence. Art may be one way that helps women who are survivors. The researcher will ask about the project, your role and opinions.

BENEFITS OF THE STUDY: This study will help Dawn House plan its work in the future. They need to know if this project is helpful and how it could be improved. You would be providing this type of information.

WHAT WOULD BE EXPECTED OF YOU? If you decide to take part in this research, you would join in group discussions about the activities of the project if you are a woman in jail. Or you may be asked for one interview if you are a worker associated with the project. Interpreters can be booked for you.

DISCOMFORTS/ RISKS: There are no specific risks associated with this study. You may not want to join it and you may not want to answer some questions. You may not wish to disclose your personal information. That’s ok.

CONFIDENTIALITY: You will not be recorded. Your name will not be kept by the researchers. It is confidential and private whether you speak or not. You may want to suggest another name so the researcher can use this other name.

The researcher will make every effort to conceal your identity but as this is a small study there is some risk that you may identifiable.

YOUR PARTICIPATION: We would be grateful if you did join in this study but you are free to refuse to join in. Even if you do decide to join in, you can stop at any time. You can still be part of the art group – it won’t change that.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY: If you wish to see the report with your art in it, Dawn House can send you a copy. If you wish to read a preliminary draft of the report you may.

PERSONS TO CONTACT: If you have any questions about the project, please contact the researcher, Suzanne Belton on 89466896 or Susan Crane on 89451388.

Indigenous contact: Ms Margaret Liddy, Darwin Correction Centre

If there is an emergency or if you have any concerns before commencing, during, or after the completion of the project, you are invited to contact the Secretary, Human Research Ethics Committee of the NT Department of Health and Community Services and Menzies School of Health Research on 08 8922 7922 or by e-mail: ethics@menzies.edu.au
Appendix B – Consent form for women in Block J Women of Art

My name is ........................................................................................................................................

I am from ..................................................................................................................country.

My best spoken language is..............................................................................................

I can understand and talk English
Little [ ]                           OK [ ]                     ....................................... ..........................Good [ ]

I would like a translator   Yes [ ]                 No[ ]

I want to join in the listen and talking with Suzanne Belton from Charles Darwin University.

I know that Suzanne is checking the Art Project.

She told me that she wants to know what happens in the Art Project, how we work together, what is good and what is not so good about the Art Project, what could be better and what we think about being in the Art Project. Suzanne has no power to stop the Art Project.

Suzanne will watch, and listen and ask us to do some activities and talking with her.

Suzanne told me that this will help the Dawn House people plan their work. She will write a report about it. She said that our opinions are important.

She also said that maybe it will make us remember bad things and if this happens Dawn House staff can help and the Prison counsellor can help.

• I freely want to join in this evaluation.

• I know that the stuff that Suzanne writes will be read by other people, and the report is a public document.

• The Prison authorities and other people will read these stories.

• My name will not be written and my words will not be used to identify who I am or my family.

• I do not have to speak about my past story.

• I know I can just sit a listen. I do not have to speak. I can say no. I do not have to join in. I can still be a part of all the activities and do the art with the project workers.

Signature: ............................................................... Date: ...........................................
I certify that I have explained the study to the volunteer and consider that she/he understands what is involved and freely consents to participation.

Researcher's name………………Signature………………..Date……………………

If you wish to contact the principle researcher this is:
Dr Suzanne Belton
Research Fellow
Graduate School for Health Practice
Institute of Advanced Studies
Charles Darwin University
Casuarina Campus
Darwin, Northern Territory 0909
Office: 61-8-8946 6896
Appendix C - Semi-structured Interview Questions

Questions for Project Workers and past workers

- How long have you been involved in the project and what is your role?
- What are you qualifications and experience?
- Who funds the work?
- How do you monitor the work?
- What activities do you facilitate?
- What is the philosophy of Dawn House and how does that translate in working with these women?
- How does feminism influence your work?
- How many women have accessed this project since its inception?
- How many women come each week?
- What is the longest the shortest interaction? What stops some women?
- Are there any problems for women accessing the project?
- How do you work with the prison staff?
- Can you talk about positive and negative examples of facilitating a community development project within a prison?
- What is community development and how do you do it in a prison?
- Why do you use art as a medium of communication/healing?
- What types of art/craft are produced?
- What do the women do exactly, how do they react to the medium?
- Can you explain the processes and techniques you use in the work?
- Are there women who only come a few times and do not return?
- How do you know that this is useful for the women – give examples?
- How many language groups do you work across – is this a problem?
- Do you collaborate with Indigenous health workers or organisations in relation to this project – which ones?
- What types of violence do women disclose?
- What types of activities work well with these women – how do you know?
- How do you give feedback to the prison – what type of information do they request from you?
- Are there any prison conventions/regulations/work practices which hinder your work?
- Do you follow-up women after release?
- Do they access Dawn House or Ruby Gaea after release?
- Have you ever assisted to sell, market or exhibit the art works?
- What suggestion do you have to ensuring the improvement and continuation of this project?
- What barriers do you perceive?

Questions for Counsellor

- How long have you been involved in the project and what is your role?
- What are your qualifications and experience?
- Have you had any specific training on domestic violence, sexual assault, or Indigenous issues?
- Do you speak any other languages?
- Do you access interpreters with your clients? How often is it needed?
- What activities do you perform in the prison?
- Do you see many of the women who are in the project for individual sessions?
- What types of issues are occurring for women in prison?
- How do you perceive the Art Project? What works well? What is not so good? What suggestions would you like to offer?
- What other programs are available for women inside or outside of jail?
• Are any specifically for Indigenous women?
• What types of services would you like to see established or continued?
• Are there any women that this type of activity is not suitable for – why?
• What are your views on recidivism and how could it be reduced?

Questions for Prison Wardens
• How long have you been involved in the project and what is your role?
• What are your qualifications and experience?
• Have you had any specific training on domestic violence, sexual assault, or Indigenous issues?
• Do you speak any other languages?
• Do you access interpreters with your clients? How often is it needed?
• What activities do you perform in the prison?
• What types of issues are occurring for women in prison?
• How do you perceive the Art Project? What works well? What is not so good? What suggestions would you like to offer?
• What other programs are available for women inside or outside of jail?
• Are any specifically for Indigenous women?
• What types of services would you like to see established or continued?
• Are there any women that this type of activity is not suitable for – why?
• What are your views on recidivism and how could it be reduced?
Appendix D - Memorandum of Understanding

**DVCE and Ruby Gaea draft MOU**

**Title of Project: Block J Women of Art Women of Art**

**Purpose**

Acknowledging the diverse life-experiences and high incidence of trauma (including DV/FV and SA) DH and RG aim to:

- Provide a safe, inclusive and creative space where women in Block J Women of Art have an opportunity for open communication and self-expression through art.
- Deliver informal community education on DV/FV.
- Encouraging women to access services that they are entitled to.

**Scope**

The Block J Women of Art WOA project involves:

- Semi-structured visits
- Discussions regarding DV/FV
- Provision of art supplies for creative expression.
- Individual discussions between facilitators and women in Block J Women of Art.

**Limitations**

- The project is not a counselling service.

**Principles**

- Do no harm
- Service provision in line with feminist principles
  - Involve women in decision making [re direction of the project and activities undertaken]
  - Safe and open communication
  - Respect cultural diversity
  - Not discriminatory
  - Working towards empowering women to recognize their potential to be self-determining
- Ensure strict confidentiality within mandatory requirement limitations.

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<tr>
<td><strong>In line with human resources required below</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend the JBWOA sessions from 9:00 – 11:15/11:30am every Wednesday</td>
<td>DVCE and RG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce sessions</td>
<td>DVCE and RG.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spokesperson for JBWOA project</td>
<td>DVCE and RG.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain checks of safe practice re disclosure/counselling practice</td>
<td>DH and RG with external supervisor as needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liaise with corrections</td>
<td>DVCE – Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RG - Clinical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain inventory on supplies [what needs reordering/purchasing?]</td>
<td>DVCE and RG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase materials</td>
<td>RG (Admin officer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paying for materials</td>
<td>DVCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send items made as requested by the</td>
<td>DVCE and RG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Responsible Parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fortnightly meetings: Document debriefing → planning → evaluation</td>
<td>DVCE and RG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minute meetings and distribute to other facilitator</td>
<td>DVCE and RG rotate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responding to and liaising with interest groups</td>
<td>DVCE and RG.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing case notes</td>
<td>RG (as needed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research and feedback best practice re facilitating art based projects [especially DV/FV/SA focused] working with women in prison [especially Indigenous women from a remote community context]</td>
<td>DVCE and RG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal supervision to cover issues arising from Block J Women of Art</td>
<td>DH and RG internal supervisors (Coordinators)</td>
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</table>

**Agreements**

- There must always be at least two facilitators present when going into J-Block.
- It is preferable if three facilitators are present.
- When DVCE is unavailable, DVCE will endeavour to have position filled by a DH staff member and if not an option, RG if possible will fill both positions for the session.
- If any smaller projects related to the JBWOA project are envisaged by DVCE and RG, clear additional sub MOUs will be co-devised to add particular guidelines to the standing MOU.
- Facilitators to communicate on all matters related to the project, e.g., Liaising with other services, changes to agreements etc.
- Liaising with Corrections psychologist will be encouraged throughout all aspects of the JBWOA project to increase accessibility for Block J Women of Art women.
- Consistent similar use of DV/FV/SA language to be used. Ruby Gaea uses the following terms in relation to sexual violence: Rape, sexual assault, sexual abuse, sexual violence, child sexual abuse.
- Safety of facilitators. Facilitators to have access to supervision, participate in peer supervision, weekly debrief after Block J Women of Art session.

**Debriefing**

It has been identified that debriefing is an important aspect of the delivery of this project. Facilitators are encouraged to identify their most effective form of debrief. Ruby Gaea and Dawn House are committed to making the following opportunities available for Block J Women of Art facilitators.

- 30 minutes after each Block J Women of Art session.
- Incorporation into the fortnightly meetings.
- Individual supervision with coordinators.
- External consultation approximately every 6 weeks.
- Ruby Gaea staff members have access to external supervision monthly.
- Dawn House staff members have professional debrief/supervision as required.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Resources needed</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Human</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Presence in prison from 8.30 – 12.00 every Wednesday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fortnightly meetings: Document debriefing → planning → evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Buying art supplies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responding to and liaising with interest groups [fluctuates]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing case notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research into best practice facilitating art based projects [especially DV/FV/SA focused] working with women in prison [especially Indigenous women from a remote community context]</td>
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<tr>
<td>External consultation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transport time</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Material</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Art supplies</td>
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<tr>
<td>DV/FV information</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artist fees [as required]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E – Letter of Support Mr Macca McDonald, Deputy Superintendent Operations

Northern Territory Correctional Services
Darwin Correctional Centre
Darwin

16 July 2007

Maria Scarlett
Secretary,
Human Research Ethics Committee
Menzies School of Health Research Committee,
PO Box
CASUARINA NT 0611

Dear Chairperson and Ethics Committee Members,

I support this application which is an evaluation of the J Block Women of Art Project which staff at Dawn House have implemented since 2003. Dawn House provides domestic violence education and counselling services to the general public in Darwin and many women in prison are often in need of this type of information and assistance.

Apart from ongoing monitoring, this programme is not formally evaluated. It would be in the best interests of all concerned if the programme was formally evaluated, with the assistance of Dr Suzanne Belton at Charles Darwin University.

Dr Belton is a qualified researcher and has a good working knowledge of violence against women. Due to the vulnerability of this group of women and on Dr Belton's advice, I submit this ethics proposal to you for your consideration.

The current project officer, Ms Pru Gell, will provide introduction and support to this study and will assist Dr Belton gain formal access to the Darwin Correctional Centre.

Yours sincerely,

Macca McDonald
Deputy Superintendent Operations
Prisoners Returning to Prison

- Of the 717 prisoners released in the Northern Territory during 2001-02, 40% (or 288) returned to prison compared to 37% nationally.
- The return rate for Indigenous prisoners was 45%, three times the return rate of 15% for non-Indigenous prisoners.
- The return rate for male prisoners was 42%, more than double the return rate of 17% for females.
- Indigenous prisoners aged between 25-34 years had the highest return rate at 51%.
- Prisoners with prior imprisonment returned at higher rates than those with no prior imprisonment at time of release. No priors 26%, one prior 49% and two or more priors 61%.
- Prisoners who served a term of imprisonment between 6 to 12 months had the highest return rate of 52%. Less than 6 months had a rate of 37% and 12 to 48 months, 48%.
- Prisoners released after serving a sentence for assault had the highest rate of return of all offence categories at 51%. They also had the highest rate of return for the same offence at 31%.
- Two thirds of recidivists returned to prison within 12 months of release. This is consistent for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous recidivists.

PRISONERS RETURNING TO CORRECTIVE SERVICES (PRISON OR COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS)

- Of the 717 prisoners released in the Northern Territory during 2001-02, 43% (or 311) returned to corrective services, compared with 46% nationally.
- 48% of Indigenous prisoners returned to corrective services compared with 17% for non-Indigenous prisoners.
- The return rate for male prisoners was 45% compared with 21% for female prisoners.
- Indigenous prisoners aged between 25-34 years recorded the highest return rate at 55%.

DEFINITIONS

Prisoners are adults that have been sentenced by the courts to a term of incarceration. Released refers to prisoners released without further supervision by Northern Territory Correctional Services.

Community Corrections supervises the non-custodial court orders of parole, probation, home detention or community work orders.

DATA SOURCE AND SCOPE

Data for this Fact Sheet came from the Northern Territory Integrated Justice Information System. It includes those prisoners released in 2001-02 and returning to correctional services within two years of release.

Certain foreign national prisoners, who are unlikely to return to the Northern Territory correctional system, were excluded from the analysis.

The Fact Sheet is based on the recidivism counting rules used by the Productivity Commission in the Report on Government Services.

Further details may be found at <www.nt.gov.au/justice/ccp/graphpages/stats.shtml>
CONCLUSIONS - KEY OUTCOMES

Innovation in managing women prisoners across Western Australia will provide:

Outcomes for the community
- Reduced crime and reduced recidivism;
- Reduced costs of offending and reoffending;
- Safer communities;
- Effective early intervention and prevention of social disadvantage issues;
- Healthier families and communities;
- Community engagement, empowerment and involvement in prisoner rehabilitation;
- A chance to have a say in the way prisoners are managed and to make a contribution; and
- Practical and effective partnerships with the Department of Justice.

Outcomes for prisoners
- Addressing cycle of offending;
- Addressing personal needs;
- Improved health and wellbeing;
- Improved social, life, work and parenting skills;
- Improved employment skills; and
- Improved family life and parenting skills.

Outcomes for children and families
- Improved family life and parenting skills;
- Effective early intervention and prevention of personal and social exclusion issues;
- Improved life chances;
- Reduced disruption to education and social connections;
- Maintenance of family and community ties;
- Improved health and wellbeing;
- Healthier relationships; and
- Reduced sense of abandonment.

Outcomes for staff
- Improved job satisfaction;
- Better training and management;
- Increased work skills;
- Flexible work practices that take account of family responsibilities;
- Opportunity to make a positive contribution to individuals and society; and
- A part to play in an important social reform.
3. New Low-Security Women's Prison

The new Metropolitan Low-Security Women's Prison represents a step in the right direction—a new, purpose-built facility with new management procedures, aimed at making every possible effort to turn the prisoners' lives around.

The $14 million project involves creating a normalised, residential-style environment in which women prisoners can enhance their development of fundamental life skills, such as budgeting, cooking and parenting.

The accommodation will comprise a series of houses, interlinked with roads and common areas such as a health centre, spiritual centre, visits centre and civic space in a landscaped environment.

The prison will have capacity to house up to 70 prisoners. Children up to the age of four years will be able to reside with their mothers, and older children will have the option of extended stays.

This family-friendly focus allows mothers to bond with their children, reducing the possibility of relationship problems caused by separation. Improved mother-child contact will also increase the chances of children turning to crime.

The prison expansion involves more than just new infrastructure. A whole new way of managing women prisoners is being developed, in line with the guiding philosophy.

For example, prison staff, while performing the duties of prison officer, may be called case officers and will no longer wear traditional, military-style uniforms. Officers will be encouraged to have an interactive relationship with prisoners, who will have a choice of prison clothing to wear, reflecting their role in the community.

These changes will lead to an environment where prisoners' dignity is respected, allowing them to develop a sense of self-respect and confidence in dealing with others.

Such confidence is essential to successfully re-integrate with the community, as is competence in a social setting. Studies have found that low-security women prisoners must have strong networks within the community in order to successfully return to the community as law-abiding citizens.

The prison already has strong links with the community to prepare prisoners for their release into the community. Many prisoners work in the community for organisations such as Swan Village of Care, Baptist Theological College, the State Herbarium and women's refuges.

The community focus is strengthened through the prisoners' Community Advisory Group, which was established in April 2002 and comprises local residents and business operators.

4. Aboriginal women

The extremely high rate of imprisonment of Aboriginal people is one of the most concerning and persistent problems confronting the WA justice system. Aboriginal women are 4.5 times more likely to be in prison than non-Aboriginal women and they represent 40% of women prisoners across WA.

A Strategic Plan for Aboriginal Services (2002 – 2005) embraces new ways of working with Aboriginal people. Actions include:

- Providing accommodation options at all prisons housing women that offer privacy and attend to their unique and diverse needs.
- Developing physical and mental health care strategies, such as:
  - A women prisoners' mental health strategy;
  - Programs for specific needs of women;
  - Audit of regional women prisoner needs;
- Reducing the negative impact of incarceration on Aboriginal prisoners, by:
  - Accommodating them within their homelands, where possible;
  - Maximising their contact with family and the community;
  - Recognising the role played by the Aboriginal Visitors Scheme;
  - Developing and sustaining an Elders-Speakers Program;
  - Identifying and encouraging Aboriginal chaplains to attend prisons;
- Encouraging the use of Aboriginal meeting places in prisons and expanding opportunities for their use;
- Implementing a prisoner grievance procedure that is sensitive to culture and gender issues; and
- Providing access to information and media in Aboriginal languages.
KEY INITIATIVES

The following initiatives have been implemented, or are under development, to improve how women offenders are managed in prison:

1. Guiding philosophy for providing women's services

   For the first time, a guiding philosophy will ensure all initiatives and services for women prisoners are developed with a strong focus on women's needs.

   Originally developed for the new Metropolitan Low Security Prison for Women, the philosophy will act as a basis for all new initiatives relating to women prisoners. This strategic approach ensures all initiatives, projects, systems and processes are women-centred, developed with a common goal and in line with common principles.

   The philosophy is based on the notion of respect and integrity in prisoners and includes:

   - **Personal responsibility and empowerment.** Personal responsibility increases the potential for women to be law-abiding and achieve a positive role in the community. Empowerment means developing a sense of value, self-worth and confidence in the ability to create a positive future.

   - **Family responsibility.** The importance of family relationships for women in custody is supported and encouraged for the benefit of the prisoners, their families and the community.

   - **Community responsibility.** A successful partnership will be built by actively encouraging community participation. Successful transition from prison to the community depends on having positive social networks and involvement in the community. Working in the community helps women prepare for release and reintegration.

   - **Respect and integrity.** In all circumstances, the inherent dignity of all people is respected and the unique characteristics, diverse backgrounds and needs and views of women are valued. Respect for individuals and the differences of their religious and cultural beliefs is the basis on which positive interpersonal relationships and self respect is built.

2. Making the change happen

   While the philosophy is the overall guiding vision for the change in management of women prisoners, practical measures have been undertaken to ensure the philosophy is applied in a strategic manner.

   A new Women's Custodial Services directorate provides high-level guidance and ensures initiatives are coordinated in line with the philosophy. This allows, for the first time, the direction of services to women prisoners at Banksia, Hyndley, Greenough, Kalgoorlie, Bruno and Northam to be coordinated through a central office.
FORGING A BETTER FUTURE

Many women in prison have experienced such disadvantage in their lives, that they are at risk of continuing to return to prison if their underlying problems are not addressed.

For this reason, it is critical these women have access to a range of appropriate services and opportunities, so they can use their time in prison wisely to address their issues and learn skills to help them cope with life in the community.

A new philosophy now being adopted across the prison system will improve services by significantly changing management systems, infrastructure and processes. This is supported by a comprehensive body of national and international research and extensive consultation with experts in this area.

Women-centred initiatives are being implemented to ensure women prisoners have access to such services and opportunities, representing a significant cultural change in a correctional system which has, in the past, managed women prisoners the same way as men.

WOMEN IN WESTERN AUSTRALIAN PRISONS

The rate of imprisonment of women has increased considerably in the past decade. Between 1991 and 1996, the rate increased to 5% of the total prison population. Today, more than 200 women prisoners are held in prisons across the State, constituting 7% of the total prison population in Western Australia.

Many women prisoners reoffend within two years of release from prison.

In 2001/02, 37.1% of women released from prison without supervision (i.e., not released on parole or a community-based order) were subsequently re-imprisoned. This figure proves what much of the community already suspects—prison is not working in the fight against offending. The Government’s challenge is to change the system to one that works.

THE DISTURBING FACTS

The results of a 2002 survey of women in WA prisons are significant and disturbing, highlighting a high level of social disadvantage and abuse.

- A widespread increase in past abuse: 78% of abuse as a child; 51% of abuse in family; 51% of abuse as a child; 51% of abuse in family.
- A significant level of health problems—61% report physical health issues; 51% had a previously diagnosed mental health problem.
- Most prisoners were young women—72% aged 25 years or under.
- Most women prisoners are mothers—62% have children under the age of 18 years.
- A significant history of drug and alcohol abuse: 81% using drugs and alcohol frequently in the six months prior to arrest.
- Very few levels of education—40% had not completed year 10 at school; 54% stated their education level was primary school or less.
- A strong correlation between drug/alcohol use and offending behaviour; 16.7%.
- Significant over-representation of Aboriginal women—40% of the total female prisoner population.

WHY WOMEN NEED DIFFERENT SOLUTIONS

In recent years, researchers and policy-makers worldwide have argued that women offenders not only need more services to put them on a par with men, but in many instances, women also require different services to men.

Women in prison are a significantly socially disadvantaged group. They generally have lower levels of education, lower levels of paid employment and lower levels of income than the Western Australian female population as a whole.

The costs of imprisonment to the individual women, their children and families are significant. Imprisonment of women can lead to the breakdown of families which, in turn, places a burden on social support systems such as health, education and welfare.

It is therefore society’s challenge and responsibility to help women use their time in prison as an opportunity.

Women have an ideal chance, while in prison, to distance themselves from abusive relationships and dependence on drugs, to focus on their mental, physical and emotional well-being by providing relevant and practical services. If a supportive environment, there is a great potential to give these women a new chance at life without crime.
REFERENCES


Office of Crime Prevention.


Office of Crime Prevention.


Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service and N. Poroch (2007). *You Do the Crime, You Do the Time: Best Practice Model of Holistic Health Service Delivery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Inmates of the ACT Prison*. ACT.