

Alternatives to Violence Project (NSW) Inc
Annual Report
For the year 2022



In 2022, AVP NSW celebrated its 30th anniversary. In preparing chapters about our work for a forthcoming book (planned for publication in 2023) about AVP around the world, we have reflected on some of our past achievements.

In a chapter about the first 30 years of AVP in Australia (Hoffmann & Smith, forthcoming), we reflected on how we were asked to present workshops to an interfaith group from Islamic, Jewish, and Christian faiths in 2004-2006, which led to the first Islamic facilitators and eventually our ongoing partnership with STARTTS (NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors). Another of our chapters (Naguran et al., forthcoming) reported on the evaluation of our workshops in partnership with STARTTS which found there were statistically significant improvements in a self developed social capital scale for the Basic and T4F (Training for Facilitators) workshops and in the General Self Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995) for the Advanced and T4F workshops. In our third chapter (Clarkson et al., forthcoming) we reflected on AVP/HIP (Help Increase the Peace) workshops in Sydney schools. After the first Australian youth workshops were trialled in Newcastle in 1994, AVP youth and school workshops have been conducted in every state and territory. The 1000 plus workshops conducted in Sydney schools by Julei Körner and Lyn Doppler's teams had a huge impact on AVP in NSW and the rest of the country. These impacts included the incorporation or restorative practices into our workshops (e.g. restorative listening and debriefing), the development of our concise manual, and strategies to support safety.

As well as looking back at some of our successes, we have been looking forward and laying a foundation that will help us expand over the coming years. In many ways AVP NSW is in a state of transition. We have been transitioning out of the pandemic. In April, STARTTS finally allowed in-person group programs to be offered in Sydney again. In Newcastle, we were able to recommence the trial of open workshops (where people can join any week). There was real enthusiasm for recommencing our in-person workshops, which meant we saw a drop in the number of online workshops.

Not all the impacts of the Pandemic have been negative and they led to innovation and change. We continue to offer online workshops (pioneered internationally by facilitators from Newcastle and Perth) and, because we are the only Australian state to be offering them, some of our participants come from interstate and overseas. The monthly First Friday community circle (that started in the mid 1990s) became weekly online support sessions that continue to go strong and play an important role in building connections and support.

These weekly sessions for AVP facilitators and anyone interested in AVP meet on Zoom every Friday from 6pm to 7.30pm. Our emphasis is on exploring ways of integrating AVP principles into our lives, working from elements of the AVP mandala. We also organised a face-to-face gathering for facilitators at Dee Why.

We still felt the effects of COVID, however, with key volunteers becoming quite ill and unable to undertake the roles they normally filled, including promotion, managing registrations and facilitating workshops. It meant we had to cancel a number of workshops. We are also finding there is a higher rate of people registering for workshops but not attending them so we are adapting for this change.

The illness of some key people highlighted the need for us to consolidate AVP as an organisation and to become serious about succession planning. Katherine and Malcolm Smith have been a backbone of AVP since they became facilitators in 1994. We need to plan now for when they decide it is time to step back and actually contemplate the possibilities of being retired.

Building the Capacity of AVP NSW

During the year we considered where we want to be in 5 years. Over the next few years we are going to establish systems, processes and practices that allow us to transform into a professionally run (while maintaining our voluntary ethos), financially sustainable organisation that draws on best practices in governance, management and continuous Improvement. Specifically we will:

1. Be widely recognised as a centre of excellence in providing community-based, experiential training in nonviolence and creative conflict transformation.
2. Expand our capacity and reach by enhancing our governance, management and administrative support (including greater use of technology).
3. Further increase the diversity of our in-person and online workshops, including offering workshops in at least two languages.
4. Build capacities of our volunteers and develop a new generation of leaders within AVP.
5. Become more financially sustainable.

To ensure we keep ourselves on track, we have set ourselves some key performance indicators and targets:

1. The number of volunteers and active facilitators. (Target: 25% increase per year for the next 3 years. 2022 benchmark: 30)
2. The percentage of workshops that generate income. (Target: 20% by July 2025. 2022 benchmark: 0%)
3. The number of formal partnerships with organisations that provide in kind support. (Target: 10 by July 2025. 2022 benchmark: 1)
4. The amount of funds available to employ an administrator/workshop registrar. (Target: Funds for at least 2 days per week by July 2025. 2022 benchmark: \$0.)
5. Volunteer engagement, retention and satisfaction rate. (Target: engagement rate - 75% of volunteers actively engaged each year; retention rate - 75%; satisfaction rate - 85% satisfied or very satisfied. 2022 benchmark: Measure yet to be developed.)

Some of the strategies we have commenced during the year include:

- Introducing weekly online training sessions for facilitators (Facilitator Fridays) to help build our facilitation capacity. (Note: they follow the First Friday sessions.)
- Applying for funds through the Perpetual Impact Grants (we are still waiting to hear the outcome)
- Updating our website
- Starting the process of being able to accept online donations and payments.

Workshops

The heart of our work continues to be our workshops and, despite needing to cancel some workshops, we have conducted 11 workshops with 99 graduates (see Figure 1). In Sydney, STARTTS continue to support the workshops and a recently appointed STARTTS staff member is going to help with promotion of our workshops. In September we offered our second workshop in Castle Hills and plan to expand these in 2023. Figure 2 shows the average number of participants for our weekly First Fridays and Facilitator Fridays.

Figure 1: In person and online workshops

Workshop Level	In-person		Online	
	Workshops	Graduates	Workshops	Graduates
Basic	3	37	4	24
Advanced	1	10	1	12
T4F (Training for Facilitators)	1	9	1	7
Total	5	56	6	43

Figure 2: First Fridays and Facilitator Fridays

Group	Number of sessions	Average number of participants	Total attendance
First Friday	50	6	300
Facilitator Fridays	44	8	352
Total	94		652

In Newcastle, after a brief trial in 2021 which was interrupted by the pandemic, we have undertaken a proper trial of Basic workshops as a weekly open group (where people can join any week), We completed 40 sessions in partnership with the Samaritans Recovery Point (which supports people recently out of prison and/or recovering from addiction). Due to the challenges faced by many of the people using Recovery Point, the traditional approach to workshops was not working well. Through the trial, a total of 64 people attended one or more sessions, with 17 people completing at least nine sessions and receiving a Basic workshop certificate. Six facilitators have helped facilitate the workshops and Recovery Point are very pleased with the impact. We plan to continue with the workshops in 2023, hopefully start another weekly group for the general community and hold an Advance and a T4F workshop in partnership with Recovery Point.

We have also started a program for students in partnership with Lurnea High School in Western Sydney. A number of teachers have been trained through our community workshops and the first two workshops have been offered within the school. This is an exciting development because Lurnea is a very multicultural school (84% of its students have a language background other than English) so it brings together our experience in schools and our work with refugees and new arrivals.

Interstate and International Connections

NSW facilitators continue to be actively involved in the broader AVP community. Because we have been the only state to be offering regular online workshops, we often have interstate participants in our online

workshops. People from Victoria and Queensland completed our online T4F and we have been helping the Victorian group to establish itself by starting with community circles. Facilitators from four other states regularly attend the weekly training for facilitators.

One of our facilitators has just completed an evaluation of AVP workshop with refugees and new arrivals in Tasmania. The evaluation (Stuart, 2022) found that there were statistically significant improvements in all three levels of workshops for both a conflict and connection scale and the General Self-Efficacy Scale used in the STARTTS evaluation. Two of our facilitators presented on the work of AVP at the University of New England Peace Studies conference and were joined by a facilitator from Queensland who was also at the conference.

Internationally, a number of our facilitators continue to be very involved including being co-convenors of the Education Committee and the Research Team. Because we are one of the very few groups to be offering both in-person and online workshops, our experience has been very influential in the AVP International guidelines for both onground and online workshops which were released in January 2023.

Conclusion

As we receive virtually no funding we could not have survived for 30 years without the support from our partners and volunteers. This year we have partnered with STARTTS, Samaritans Recovery Point and Lurnea High School. Thank you for supporting our work. This year, 30 volunteers (who are the lifeblood of AVP) have been involved. We value and appreciate you all. In AVP we are all teachers and learners and we continue to learn and cherish people from all walks of life who take the risk of joining our workshops. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

We believe 2022 has laid the foundation for a period of growth and expansion. While periods of change can be challenging, we are excited by the potential we see for AVP in NSW. We have great faith in our facilitators and know that together we can make a difference.

Graeme Stuart, Katherine Smith and Wendy Zammit
On behalf of the AVP NSW Council
March 2022



References:

- Clarkson, K., Smith, K., & Körner, J. (Forthcoming). Innovation in AVP youth workshops in Sydney, Australia. In G. Stuart, D. Addy, V. M. John, B. J. McEady, J. Shuford, & T. S. Rocco (Eds.), *Innovation in AVP youth workshops in Sydney, Australia*. Innovative Ink Publishing.
- Hoffmann, J., & Smith, K. (Forthcoming). Recollections and reflections: 30 years of AVP in Australia. In G. Stuart, D. Addy, V. M. John, B. J. McEady, J. Shuford, & T. S. Rocco (Eds.), *Building peace and community: The Alternatives to Violence Project around the world*. Innovative Ink Publishing.
- Naguran, A., Stuart, G., Bibby, H., Momartin, S., Smith, K., Bajraktarevic-Hayward, J., Coello, M. J., & Landbourne, W. (Forthcoming). AVP with refugee communities in Sydney, Australia. In G. Stuart, D. Addy, V. M. John, B. J. McEady, J. Shuford, & T. S. Rocco (Eds.), *Building peace and community: The Alternatives to Violence Project behaviour around the world*. Innovative Ink Publishing.
- Schwarzer, R., & Jerusalem, M. (1995). Generalized Self-Efficacy scale. In J. Weinman, S. Wright, & M. Johnston (Eds.), *Measures in health psychology: A user's portfolio. Causal and control beliefs*. NFER-Nelson.
- Stuart, G. (2022). *Evaluation of Peaceful Pathways' Alternatives to Violence Project workshops with migrants in Tasmania*. Australian Red Cross (Tasmania).
<https://avp.international/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Stuart-2022-AVP-with-refugees-evaluation.pdf>