

Marninwarantikura Women's Shelter Review Stage 2 Report



**A Harm Free Approach: More than Emergency Accommodation
Marninwarantikura Women's Shelter Review Stage 2 Report
November 2017**

**Moreton Consulting pay our respects to the Elders past and present.
We also pay our respects to the Bunuba people and the many people
who are working together for change.**

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What this paper is about

This paper documents the second stage of the review of Marninwarntikura Women's Shelter by outlining a new Shelter model based on:

- a review of current operations
- engagement with key stakeholders both internal and external to the organisation (including other similar service providers), and
- evidence on best practice in service delivery for Aboriginal women and children escaping domestic violence.

The review positions the work in a healing and trauma-informed framework consistent with Marninwarntikura's strategic direction.

Summary

The revised service delivery model focuses on moving the Shelter from short stay emergency accommodation to crisis supported accommodation. The Shelter aims to offer more intensive support and referral to both the women and children, including information on cycle of violence and safety planning.

The model reflects feedback from consultations with local women across the age groups, and internal and external stakeholders. It applies a healing and trauma-informed approach to the support and Shelter environment.

The new delivery model recognises the importance of working with children who access the Shelter as part of undertaking early intervention work and interrupting the intergenerational cycle of violence and trauma. It is recommended that all staff receive training in working with children and that the position of a specialist children's worker is included in the new contract negotiations.

Implementing the revised model will require a cultural shift in the way things are done at the Shelter. The new model will need to be supported by developing cultural proficiency amongst non-indigenous staff and by shifting to a culture of high expectations, a non-judgemental approach, and seeing strengths and opportunities rather than deficits.

A number of minor changes to the Shelter environment have been recommended as well as seeking funding and pro bono resources for a purpose-built Shelter.

The level of outreach that can be safely offered within current resources is minimal, however this may be increased by working in coordination with other Marninwarntikura services and external providers.

Promotion of the service is essential. The Shelter's reputation has suffered for some time now and there is a need to provide information on the Shelter and what it offers. However, the best promotion will come from word of mouth. If women are having a better experience at the Shelter this will serve as a great recommendation for others to access the service.

Recommendations

This review recommends that the Shelter undertake the following actions:

1. Move from an emergency accommodation model to a crisis supported accommodation model. This will require a shift from 2–3 day stays to a stay of up to 3 weeks.
2. Adopt the model of wrap around support built on a trauma-informed and strengths based approach (see Framework in Appendix 2).
3. Implement a regular program of activities, workshops, outings and visits from staff across Marninwarntikura or other Fitzroy Crossing providers.
4. Develop internal and external referral pathways for women and children accessing the service.
5. Continue to work closely with other services and external stakeholders in Fitzroy Crossing – local departmental officers, police, hospital, Nindilingarri, Marra Worra Worra.
6. Continue to build a team of skilled staff by creating permanent positions, holding regular team meetings and offering staff regular strengths based supervision and opportunities for training and professional development.
7. Develop a training schedule for Shelter staff for the next 6 months and thereafter.
8. Review the policy and procedure manual with team members at team meetings and reviews and updates as required.
9. Purchase resources for the refuge including posters, pamphlets, and DVDs.
10. Create community designed fact sheets on topics relevant to women accessing the Shelter – for example family and domestic violence, healing, impact of trauma.
11. Change the internal environment according to recommendations in the document and report by Royal Far West.
12. Promote the Shelter – design a pamphlet including local artwork and get it printed professionally.
13. Get a regular spot on the local radio and develop promotional ads that can be played in Kimberley Kriol and other relevant languages on the radio.
14. Visit communities to inform families of the revised model.
15. Establish an Advisory Group of local women to provide feedback on the Shelter and suggest areas for improvement.

Introduction

Why does Marninwarntikura exist?

Both the vision and the purpose of the organisation are critical to answering this question and understanding the importance of the Women's Shelter.

Marninwarntikura's vision: We strengthen the power of women and their families to create culturally rich, engaged and healthy lives for Indigenous peoples living in the Fitzroy Valley and beyond.

Marninwarntikura's purpose: Marninwarntikura is a centre of inspiration that provides women and their families a place for positive change and leadership, embracing the cultural beliefs of the Fitzroy Valley communities while engaging with the opportunities of the 21st century.

Marninwarntikura has been built from the ground up since the Women's Shelter opened in 1995. Accountability to the women and children from the Fitzroy Valley became a hallmark of the organisation.

This review is built around the notion of accountability – most importantly to the women and children who need the service; to the Board and services of Marninwarntikura; to the broader Fitzroy Valley communities; and to the WA Department of Communities.

The review acknowledges the importance of a harm-free strategy that recognises frameworks of oppression and bases solutions on empowerment for individuals, communities and systems. It proposes a substantial number of changes that can be implemented now and offers additional recommendations for future contract negotiations with the Department.

The Marninwarntikura executive and staff team and the WA Department of Communities have worked collaboratively with the support of Moreton Consulting to co-design this new model of service delivery.

Background

The Women's Shelter was opened in 1995 and remains a central focus of Marninwarntikura. It was the first service to be funded, following the establishment of the Marninwarntikura Women's Group in 1991. For some years Marninwarntikura's sole focus was the Women's Shelter. That changed with the opening of the Fitzroy Women's Resource Centre in 2003.

The Shelter has largely operated as a crisis response for women and children experiencing domestic violence in the Fitzroy Valley. It is typical of a SAAP funded service operating crisis

supported accommodation, with funding administered by the WA Department for Communities.

Over time the Shelter has shifted from a supported model towards an acute emergency accommodation model. The review addresses this shift.

Methodology – what I did

This paper and the new Shelter model have been informed by the paper developed in Stage 1 of the project Marninwarntikura Women's Shelter (2017), and other more recent research.

Engagement and consultation was undertaken with managers and staff from across Marninwarntikura and with key external stakeholders including the Department of Communities, Nindilingarri, Marra Worra Worra, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, and Fitzroy Crossing Police.

Discussions were also held with other similar services in remote locations in both the Kimberley and Northern Territory on their existing models of service delivery.

A project advisory group was established to guide the co-design process and included members from across Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre.

Context

In 2014 the Shelter was threatened with closure and during subsequent negotiations with the WA Government, the Shelter agreed to a new model of service delivery which emphasised outreach and early intervention and prevention activities. On 1 March 2015 Marninwarntikura and the Department of Child Protection and Family Support entered into a new funding agreement which was focussed on the new model. This funding agreement was due to finish on 30 September 2016, but was extended to 30 June 2018.

For a range of reasons, Marninwarntikura has been unable to fully implement the new model. In 2016 an action plan was developed by Marninwarntikura and the Department to identify areas for improvement and remedial actions. Work on this has been underway during 2017, however limited progress has been made due to staffing complications. In September a new manager for the Shelter was appointed. This review addresses most if not all of the issues raised in the action plan and proposes a new model of service delivery.

The new model is informed by the paper completed in Stage 1 of this project (February 2017). Stage 1 reviewed government domestic violence policy direction at the local, state and national levels, and documented the research on better practice when delivering services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a particular focus on services

for women and children escaping domestic violence and with a trauma-informed healing focus.

A report undertaken by Flinders University (2008) identified a range of prevention and intervention initiatives that are needed for an integrated approach to addressing domestic and family violence. The provision of a continuum of individualised and open-ended support addressing all aspects of support and life skills (including outreach) was seen as critical to supporting women and children affected by domestic and family violence.

The new model is supported by the findings of the COAG Expert Advisory panel on domestic violence. The expert panel identified the need to develop a trauma-informed conceptual framework in collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that “recognises the contributing impacts of colonisation, interruption of culture and kinship ties, intergenerational trauma, gender inequality and related social norms which perpetuate family violence” (recommendation 5.1). This is enhanced by Recommendation 5.3 which focuses on building and supporting an appropriately skilled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce to deliver trauma-informed responses to family violence.

The new model reflects best practice for Indigenous service delivery – that is, services that are community owned, designed and controlled, and responding to their local environment.

What we learned from stakeholder consultations

In the consultation phase of this project I spoke with Shelter staff, other staff from across Marninwarntikura, key external stakeholders in Fitzroy Crossing and staff from the Department of Communities. I sought advice from the project advisory group as the project progressed

Internal feedback from staff across the organisation

- Would like to see the Shelter become client focussed and accountable to the women and children.
- See a need for deep listening, engagement and activities.
- Would like to see staff out of the office and more visible in the Shelter.
- See a need for cultural sensitivity, understanding and a consistent, professional approach with the women and children.
- Want to see a greater focus on maintaining confidentiality and conflict of interest procedures.
- Would like to see a greater focus on working with children.

External feedback from key stakeholders in the Fitzroy Valley and the Department of Communities

- There has been a change of police personnel and there is an important opportunity to renew a regular working relationship with the team and provide training and other relevant information.
- There is a need to work closely with the police to respond quickly to DV incidents and get support for community pick-ups.
- The Shelter is seen as an acute service rather than a place where women and children are well supported.
- There is a lack of activities for women and children when staying at the Shelter.
- Other services want promotional material to pass onto women who may need the Shelter.
- Services are willing to work with the Shelter in either outreach or coming to the Shelter to do activities or meet with women on a one-to-one basis (for example, financial counselling, nutrition, health information).

Overarching themes emerging from the consultations

- The Shelter is seen as an essential service.
- Over a period of time the Shelter's focus has shifted from supported accommodation to emergency accommodation.
- The rates of occupancy have been generally low.
- The Shelter suffers from a poor reputation with some stakeholders and some women across the communities.
- Minimal support is offered to women and children who have accessed the Shelter.
- The promotion of the Shelter has been almost non-existent and it has had low levels of collaboration with other stakeholders
- At times a lack of cultural sensitivity displayed by senior staff has caused offense to both clients and local staff employed at the Shelter.
- There was acknowledgement that improvements had been taking place over the past few months.

The new shelter model

Principles

The research and consultation led to the development of a series of principles upon which the new Shelter model is based.

- Ensure accountability that is consistent with the Aboriginal Services and Practice Framework 2016–18, both bottom up and top down.
- Provide assistance and support.
- Understand and implement a strengths based approach for staff and clients of the service.
- Create and support a culture of high expectations.
- Develop primary, secondary and tertiary interventions to support moving from crisis to early intervention to prevention, including specialist support.
- Deliver healing and trauma-informed services in the context of colonisation, and current and intergenerational trauma.
- Understand that empowerment is something that can be supported however never given.

What the new Shelter model aims to achieve

The new model is designed to meet core business requirements – providing supported accommodation to women and children escaping domestic and family violence. It should be more than emergency accommodation with little support offered.

The model reflects feedback from local Aboriginal women across the age groups who identified the need for cultural safety as paramount to their ability to engage with a service. These women talked about their difficulties accessing some of the generalist services in town due to a lack of cultural safety (for example, police, hospital, and generic counselling services).

The supported accommodation model provides the opportunity for women and children to change their life circumstances by offering safety, information (including on the cycle of violence), access to resources and referral, alternative options, and ongoing support.

The model is based on a strengths approach. This will inform not only the support for women and children but also team development and supervision. This approach asks women to be responsible for the things they can be responsible for and provides skills based support where needed (for example, cooking meals, play with children, routines with children, health and hygiene), and referral to other support.

A strengths-based approach to care, support and inclusion says let's look first at what people can do with their skills and their resources and what the people around them can do in their relationships and their communities. People need to be seen as

more than just their care needs – they need to be experts and in charge of their own lives.

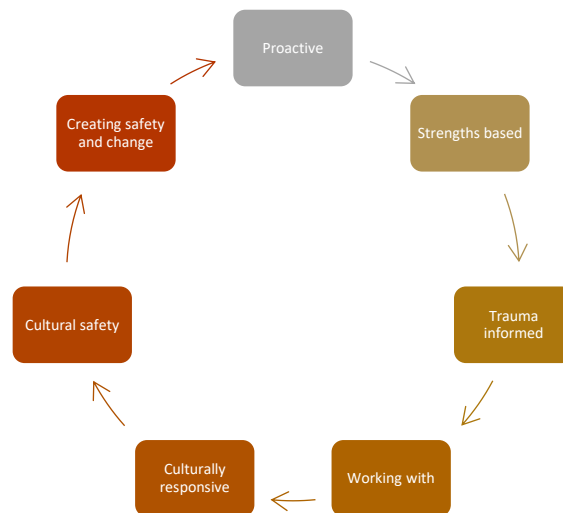
Alex Fox, chief executive of the charity Shared Lives

The model is built around building a strong staff team through the creation of more permanent and part-time positions, regular team meetings, and skills development. Access to a range of training and regular supervision will be essential and will include strengths based approaches and working in a trauma aware and informed way. Staff will also be supported to progress their own healing journeys as part of modelling trauma-informed approaches.

Strengths-based wrap around support for women and children

A framework for strengths-based wrap around support has been developed (see Appendix 1). This framework covers intake and assessment (any critical risks related to health, safety), and developing a support plan with agreed actions (in collaboration with the client and available to client including any notes on progress). The support plan focuses on health, legal support, financial and any other identified areas. The support plan may trigger referral actions either to a service within the Marninwarntikura suite of services or to an external service. A guide to internal and external referral pathways is being developed by Marninwarntikura.

Strengths based wrap around support



Information and education on the cycle of domestic violence will be available at the Shelter and shared with clients via brochures, discussion, DVDs, and workshops.

Regular activities, workshops and contact from other support services will be built into the weekly schedule. It will be essential to develop a coordinated approach for women to access a range of internal professionals including at the Family Violence Prevention Legal Service, the counsellor, the social worker and the healing coordinator. These staff members can also

be used to provide information/workshop and group sessions and training for Shelter staff if appropriate.

All staff will be required to be visible in the Shelter and when two or more staff are on duty, they should split office/admin duties so that one person is physically present in the Shelter. The Shelter should allocate specific 'quiet' times for data input and other administrative tasks. Some of these could possibly be part of the duties for evening and weekend staff.

Leaving the Shelter

When a woman is leaving the Shelter a safety plan will be developed. This may include follow up through outreach visits by Shelter staff.

Outings

It is recommended that the Shelter organise regular outings – to the river or other places on country. This will break the monotony of being at the Shelter and encourage group discussion on issues affecting women and potential for change in a more comfortable environment. It will be important to encourage women to attend the weekly nurture night hosted by Marninwarantikura.

Supporting children

There is an increasing awareness of the importance of supporting the children who accompany their mothers when accessing supported accommodation services. The trauma experienced by children who live with domestic violence is now recognised and the Shelter can provide unique support to the children who access the service. In 2016–17, 205 children accessed the Shelter and over 50 per cent of these children were in the 0–5 years range.

This model proposes the employment of a specialist children's worker to focus on developing a program of activities to support the children who access the Shelter. The interruption of trauma and the opportunity to begin to break the cycle of trauma is an essential early intervention approach. This approach is supported by the research undertaken to develop the *First 1000 Days* initiative (Arabena, 2016) and by Wendy Bunston and others (Bunston and Sketchley, 2012) on "infant led recovery in refuges".

Funding for this additional child specialist position would form part of the negotiations with the Department for the new contract.

The Shelter can arrange with both Bawa Gawiy and the Child and Parent Centre to access short-term childcare or mobile play group activities and parenting support. It is recommended that support for young children is provided both at the Shelter as well as away from the Shelter where possible. The Marulu unit and Jandu Yani U (Triple P) parent coaches can also provide valuable expertise and support to both women and children at the Shelter.

If children are school age there is an expectation that they will attend school.

The Shelter staff will be trained to identify and utilise other resources for developing structured play and engagement with children including using outdoor spaces (some suggested resources are listed below).

Engagement

Training in engagement skills and how to have *conversations with a purpose* will assist staff to develop and build constructive and supportive relationships with the women and children at the Shelter.

It is strongly recommended to avoid using “having a smoke” as an engagement tool.

Data collection

Information collected via initial assessment and ongoing engagement will be used to complete Common Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework (CRARMF) form and data input into the electronic data system recognising that this form is not appropriate as an assessment tool when working with women accessing the Shelter.

Shelter staff

Roster

Previously most Shelter positions were filled with casual staff. This proved challenging for both filling shifts and creating a Shelter team. There appeared to be very little investment if any in training or professional development. Team leaders have been appointed for weekdays and weekends.

To build a staff team, a new roster has been developed creating more permanent and permanent part-time positions. Pay rates have been classified against the award and costings reflect these classifications (see Appendix 2).

Whilst on-call has been proposed as an alternative to placing overnight workers in the Shelter, this model is not suitable given the difficulty of keeping the address confidential and potential for security breaches (keeping women and children safe) and the requirement to respond to after-hours referral. Many of the local staff do not have transport and live in the surrounding communities which would also inhibit an on-call system.

The Shelter should continue to develop the roster to include more permanent positions. Regular team meetings have been implemented and should continue.

Training and staff development

The Shelter will need to make a strong commitment to recruiting skilled staff where possible and to providing regular training and professional development opportunities. Creating a more skilled and knowledgeable workforce will enable comprehensive support for the women and children accessing the Shelter. It is also likely to generate a higher level of commitment by staff to the Shelter.

This approach is consistent with creating a culture of high expectations both with staff in the Shelter and for the women and children accessing the Shelter. It is a positive and demonstrable way of embedding a commitment to challenging the impact of colonisation and underpins a trauma-informed approach.

Training options should be explored and a training calendar developed. Options include:

- staff attending video link modules at local Department of Communities office
- developing a collaboration with the TAFE to support flexible delivery for Certificate II or III in Community Services, and
- linking with other local refuges to bring trainers to the region for example Wendy Bunston to undertake “infant led recovery” workshops.

Staff at Nindilingarri have offered to deliver training sessions on a variety of relevant issues and the Department has offered training support for the SHIP data system.

All staff will receive face-to-face induction informed by an induction package with a focus on all supported accommodation elements, confidentiality, strengths-based approach and how to manage conflict of interest.

It is essential that all non-Indigenous staff have a comprehensive induction into working in Fitzroy Crossing (the *dos and don'ts* of living in a small Aboriginal community). This would cover working with both staff and clients who are affected by years of colonisation and trauma and, working effectively in a strengths based way with both team members and clients of the services.

Environment

Royal Far West, one of Marninwarntikura’s partners, provided an assessment of the Shelter environment with the findings included in their broader report to the Child and Parenting Centre. I have referred the Shelter Manager to this report. The report specifically focuses on creating an environment that is conducive to healing particularly from traumatic experiences.

Some of the key points are summarised here.

Internal

- Provide an intake room that is opened up, welcoming, light and airy. Provide a rocking chair for women to sit in.
- Provide lots of DV related information in the Shelter and culturally relevant posters and other visual material around the walls.
- Put the TV in a place where it is not the central focus of the room. Consider getting rid of free-to-air TV and playing movies instead. Create a discreet TV area with smaller chairs.
- Put soft rugs on the floor to encourage play on the floor.

- Provide access to art materials that can be used by adults and children.
- Paint the area including one wall with special paint for the children to draw on or provide a chalk wall.
- Buy heavy toys that are less likely to be taken and provide a small pack of toys for each child to have for themselves to take away.
- Set up a system that asks women to make a contribution to keeping the house clean – reduce cleaner to 2–3 times per week for a more thorough clean.

External

- Balance the need for security with creating warm welcoming spaces.
- Changing the entry to be open, light, welcoming and remove garbage bins to another location.
- Stop smoking outside the refuge.

Develop a submission for a purpose-built Shelter

In the longer term there is a goal to build a purpose-built, architect-designed Shelter that meets the accommodation and support needs of Fitzroy Crossing women and children in a more appropriate way than the current accommodation.

It is recommended that Marninwarntikura develop a proposal for State-based housing to fund a purpose-built Shelter. Initial discussion with the traditional land owners to determine lease arrangements could take place immediately. A meeting is scheduled in February 2018 with architects who will offer their services pro bono.

Outreach

With current staffing levels there is minimal opportunity for a coordinated approach to outreach. If staffing levels remain the same, it is recommended that the Shelter work closely with other Marninwarntikura services and key external partners – Nindilingarri and Marra Worra Worra – to develop an outreach program. This would be supported by promotional materials, information on cycle of violence and other supports available to women.

The outreach will focus on women in Fitzroy Crossing as well as women in surrounding communities and include follow up with previous clients of the Shelter. The outreach program will need to be mindful of risks and include measures that ensure staff safety.

Referral from communities across the valley needs to be improved. The Shelter will need to develop a system with police and Marra Worra Worra for pick-ups from community when there is a referral. Timely pick-up is essential – there is a current issue with police staff and slow response time (anywhere from hours to days).

Apply for an outreach coordinator position

Achieving a high level of outreach requires a dedicated position. If an outreach coordinator position were funded this position would coordinate regular outreach in collaboration with existing Shelter staff, other Marninwarntikura services and external providers.

The position would also work to support existing safety houses/mechanisms to support women in their communities. It would explore access to emergency relief funds or other funding sources for food, linen and towels. And it would facilitate building relationships and trust with women who may access the Shelter, acknowledging the existing support occurring in communities for women and children.

Policy and procedure

The policy and procedure manual has been updated as part of this review process. It is recommended that individual procedures are addressed in team meetings to encourage understanding, ownership as part of a continuous review and improvement process. There is a need to support all staff to fully understand the importance of maintaining confidentiality and for the implementation of the revised conflict of interest procedures.

External relationships

All the external stakeholders in Fitzroy Crossing showed a keen interest in working with the Shelter – offering visits by their specialist workers, workshops, training for staff and joint outreach activities. It is recommended that a monthly or bi-monthly get together of the key services is arranged to focus on support for women and children and potential for joint service delivery. This would include the consortium members – Marra Worra Worra, Nindilingarri Cultural Health Services, KALACC and other relevant providers.

Promotion

The consultations revealed the need for additional promotion of the Shelter particularly to women living in communities across the Fitzroy Valley and to communicate the changes the Shelter is making to its model of service delivery.

Some suggestions for promotion include:

1. Design a pamphlet including local artwork and get it printed professionally.
2. Develop a radio ad in Kriol about the Shelter and organise semi-regular interviews with presenters at the local radio station to talk about the Shelter.
3. Work with other services to get the pamphlet out to women across the communities.
4. Consider launching the new model.

5. Develop a series of fact sheets on the cycle of violence, trauma and healing with input from the healing initiatives team and women from the Fitzroy Valley.
6. Organise quarterly family nights in collaboration with the Men's Shed and other key services.

It will be important to focus some promotion specifically towards women unaccompanied by children as a specific and potentially marginalised group.

Getting regular feedback

The Shelter would benefit from obtaining regular feedback from both clients and women from across the communities and other external stakeholders as part of the continuous improvement of the services.

A compliments/complaints system has been established within the Shelter. It is recommended an Advisory Group be established for the Shelter made up of local women. This group could meet once per quarter (participants would be remunerated for their time) to provide overall feedback on the Shelter and its offerings and offer guidance and advice on areas for improvement.

Resources

A variety of resources are available nationally that may be relevant. The following are suggested as places to access resources for the Shelter with a focus on both women and children.

Domestic and family violence

Ourwatch – Developing Indigenous specific resources

<https://www.ourwatch.org.au/>

Healthinfo net – various resources

<http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/>

<https://www.respect.gov.au/campaign/atsi-materials/> lots of printable docs

<https://www.npywc.org.au/d-and-fv-service-intro/resources/> good resources

DV Resource Centre Victoria

<http://www.dvrcv.org.au/>

Queensland Centre for Domestic and family violence research

<https://noviolence.org.au/>

WA Women's Council

<http://www.womenscouncil.com.au/>

DV NSW

<http://dvnsw.org.au/>

DVDs

Gammin love –

<http://www.healthinonet.ecu.edu.au/key-resources/promotion-resources?lid=21758>

Stand by Me (Marninwarntikura)

Yajilarra (Marninwarntikura)

For children

“Helping Babies Heal” Resource for working with children 0-6 years, Wendy Bunston – see order form in additional folder of resources.

McAuley Community Services for Women

<http://www.mcauleycsw.org.au/>

SNAICC

<http://www.snaicc.org.au/>

NAPCAN

<http://napcan.org.au/>

Some remote services

- NPY Women's Council Domestic and Family Violence Service
<https://www.npywc.org.au/d-and-fv-service-intro/>
- Katherine Women's Crisis Centre – Jo Gamble
- Kalumburu - Fiona Sproule – undertaking empowerment work with women
- Women's Services across the Kimberley – work towards developing a peak body for training, information sharing and advocacy.

Working with men

There is a large gap in the Fitzroy Valley communities – the provision of support for men’s healing and working with the perpetrators of domestic and family violence.

Marninwarntikura has led the way on raising this issue over the years and will continue to collaborate with the Men’s Shed to begin a process for identifying options and seeking funding.

Opportunities:

- Fitzroy Valley Futures Interagency collective impact project – influence this project to focus on whole of valley approach to supporting Aboriginal men.
- Healing Foundation offer of bringing both staff and men from other communities to share stories of change and their experiences.

New positions

Two new positions are recommended for the revised model:

- Outreach Coordinator 4 days per week
- Specialist Children’s Worker 4 days per week

It is anticipated that negotiations for these positions would form part of the contract negotiations with the Department of Communities.

References

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Appendix 1 – Strengths based wrap around support framework/supervision framework

Strengths based wrap around support

Strengths based wrap around support (SBWAS) describes the things you can do to best help the women and children who come to Marninwarantikura Women’s Shelter. Some people call it case management. It offers a way of helping that takes in the whole situation. It relies on building good relationships with the women and children that are non-judgemental and respectful. Getting to know where the clients feel strong and what help they can draw on is important too.

The goal of this support is to assist women and children to understand more about the help they can get, how to have safer and better lives and understand more about how they can manage their own lives.

The top priority of this process is to ensure that cultural safety is always explored and attended to and includes:

- **Gathering information** - Check what a person needs and talk about their story.
- **Undertaking assessments** – building a relationship and giving the woman time to talk.
- **Ongoing support** - Assisting clients to identify what support they need, what action they would like to take then agreeing and incorporating into an action plan.
- **Coordinating and providing services** – offering available supports and linking to other areas of the organisation and external services.
- **Monitoring progress and exit planning** – discussing with the client how things are going and agreeing on a safety plan when the woman is leaving the Shelter.

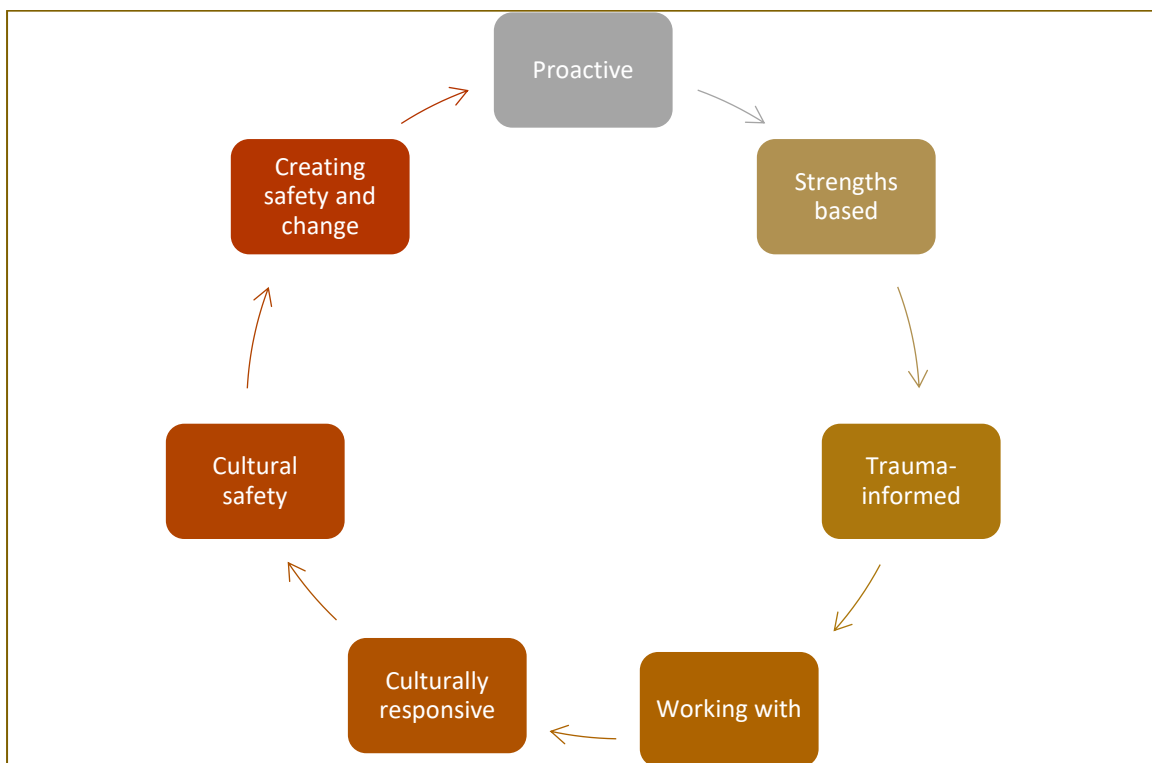
As a support worker you can advocate on behalf of clients for access to services and supports. Importantly you will also provide direct services; these can be as diverse as assisting with daily living skills or providing specialist support. The provision of direct service delivery is critical in establishing rapport and building a trusting relationship with the client.

The principles of a strengths-based approach include:

- All people have strengths and capacities
- People can change
- People change and grow because of their strengths, resilience and capacities
- People are the experts in their own situations

- The problem is the problem; the person is not the problem
- Sometimes problems get in the way of someone seeing their strengths and their ability to find solutions
- People have good intentions
- People are doing the best they can
- The power for change is within us and sometimes we need information and support to find and understand this power for ourselves.
- Flexibility is essential
- Based on being empathetic and non-judgemental
- We must adopt a *power with* approach not *power over*

Client-centred, strengths-based wrap around support



Strengths based work is based on building a relationship of trust as the foundation of all respectful and constructive helping processes.

Stages of the strengths approach:

1. Listening to women's stories, exploring the context and the meaning they give their experience, and identifying the core issues
2. Identifying and highlighting strengths and exceptions to problems
3. Developing a picture of the future and setting goals through an exploration of women's aspirations

4. Identifying additional resources that complement women's strengths and goals
5. Mobilising strengths and resources through a plan of action
6. Reviewing and evaluating progress and change

The column approach (see next page) is one way to structure conversations you might have with women accessing the Shelter.

The Column Approach

| Stories and Issues – What I don't want to be happening Ask people to share their stories and help them to clarify issues | Strengths and Exceptions – What's been tried – (what's worked? what hasn't?) What are your strengths and are there times when the problems aren't happening? | The Picture of the Future (what would feel ok?) Ask questions that help women explore their dreams and what they want in their lives | Other Resources What would you like to try? Ask women questions that help them identify the resources that might help them | Plans and Steps Ask questions that enable people to specify concrete steps towards their goals |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| What's happening? How do you feel about this? How long has this been a problem? How is it affecting you and others? | What strengths do you have that might help? What do you do well? What's happening when these issues aren't around? | What do you want to be happening instead? What will be different when the issues are addressed? | Who else might be able to help? What else might be useful? | What steps can you take to move towards your goals? What strengths do you have? What else do you want to do or what do you need? |

The Eight Elements To Case Management

Check Their Needs

Entry Screening

- Be clear about who you can help
- Be clear about what you can do
- Talk in a friendly place
- Act quickly, on urgent/ emergency needs
- Use other services, if needed
- If you can't help, tell them why
- If they don't accept this, they can talk to the co-ordinator
- Write down what you found out and how you helped

Talk About Their Story

Assessment

- Ask if it is okay to get their info from other services or give it to other services they used
- See what has to be done first
- See what needs to be done over the next few weeks and months
- Find out what their hopes, skills and interests are
- Give them time to open up and give their whole story
- Let them know you will keep their story private
- Check that their needs are met in basic safety, health, income, shelter, food and warmth
- Write down what you have done

Think About Your Next Action

Planning

- Think about what their hopes, skills and interests are
- Talk with your fellow workers for more ideas
- List the things you need to do, and that they need to do
- Start small, think big
- Make sure short term needs are met quickly
- Write down what you both agree to do and when you will do it

Helping Them

Direct Service

- Make sure their privacy is respected
- Keep them up to date with what you are doing for them
- Keep yourself up to date with what other services are available
- Write down how you help and what happens (good and bad)

Get Someone Else To Help Them

Co-ordination

- Talk with co-workers to get ideas on how to help
- Talk with other services
- Work out how you and other services can work together
- Write down what you do

See How They Are Going

Do Something Else If It Is Not Working

Monitoring Review

- See what they have done well
- Encourage them where they have done well
- Sit down, ask questions and listen
- Take any chance to see a positive
- Check what you and they have done against the original plan
- Make changes to the plan if needed
- Write down the successes and what needs to be worked on

Finish The Job

See They Keep Getting Help

Check In Later

Exit Planning

Does Client Have A Future?

- Make a time for your work with them to end
- Tell them what follow-up support will be given
- Be clear about who needs to be part of the decision to finish direct support
- If the person chooses to leave at any time, make sure they are linked up to support people or services
- If you decide they need to leave make sure they are linked up to services or get outreach support
- Make sure they have somewhere to go and can get there

See if You Did Everything You Could To Help

Evaluation

- Think about what was successful and what could be done better
- Talk with the person you helped in a relaxed way
- Talk with other workers
- Talk with the person's family and friends
- If your service has forms to be filled in by the person leaving, make sure they understand the words used
- Help them fill it in (they talk, you write)
- Use this information to do your job better and show your community what the service does and how well it is done

Strengths-based Supervision

Strengths-based supervision aims to:

- support the development of skilled staff to make competent decisions and in turn empower clients to make good decisions;
- identify staff strengths and amplify them through supervision;
- use the strengths based approach to create a process for doing parallel practice;
- use this approach flexibly as a framework for conversation and reflection;
- provide a space for exploring solutions and creating opportunities for learning; and,
- to share the responsibilities, challenges and rewards of effective client support.

Key Attributes of the Supervisor:

- Seeks to discover staff competencies and strengths;
- Intentionally supports staff to identify strengths;
- Uses staff/client interactions and other activities to foster skill development;
- Actively uses solution-focused language and concepts within the supervisory relationship;
- Coaches for success;
- Encourages staff learning and shares responsibility for identifying learning goals;
- Creates a climate of trust and safety in supervision, while maintaining professional boundaries;
- Develops a staff's frame of reference to increase competency;
- Integrates cultural awareness and respect into the supervisory relationship; and,
- Engages in ongoing and mutual evaluation of performance and relationship.

As a result of these attributes, a climate of trust and mutual direction may be established that supports a strong and positive supervisory relationship; creativity, shared engagement and ownership of practice and outcomes; and a positive parallel process of behaviour.

Adapted from: Kim Berg, I., & Kelly, S. 2000 *Building solutions for child protective services*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton.

Strengths based supervision can be built around a set of questions to enable both the staff member and supervisor to reflect prior to coming together for the supervisory session. This supports and encourages a reflective work practice that can be continued in team meetings and daily work. An approach similar to the column approach described above could be useful. Engaging the team in developing these questions will support ownership and engagement.

Supervision Agreements

It is a useful practice to establish supervision agreements to support a transparent and agreed approach to supervision. An agreement might include:

- How often and for how long supervision will occur.
- Where and when supervision will take place.

- What are the bottom line standards, expectations and responsibilities?
- What are the relevant policies, procedures etc?
- What will happen if an issue with performance arises?
- How does supervision link with annual performance appraisal?
- How will supervision be recorded?
- How will the principles, processes and skills of strengths-based practice be built into the supervision processes?

ATTRIBUTES OF GREAT SUPERVISION

1. Openness to various personality types and cultural approaches (Everyone desires respect)
2. Accepts suggestions and feedback (Partners share power)
3. Confidence in the skills of the staff (Everyone has strengths)
4. Allows staff to share concerns (Everyone needs to be heard and understood)
5. Focuses on the skills that each member brings to the team (Everyone has strengths)
7. Recognises successes (Everyone has strengths)
8. Truly embraces a non-judgmental approach (Judgments can wait)
9. Inspires a shared vision and contribution from everyone to this shared vision (Partnership is a process)
10. Understands that collective wisdom comes from multiple viewpoints (Everyone desires respect)
12. True dialogue occurs (Everyone needs to be heard and understood)
13. Walks the talk (Partnership is a process)
15. Great listener (Everyone needs to be heard and understood)
16. Flexible (Partnership is a process)
17. Treats others with respect (Everyone desires respect)
18. Employees are empowered to make decisions (Partners share power)
19. Shares whatever information he/she can (Partners share power)
20. Acknowledges and appreciates staff contributions (Everyone has strengths)

References

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McCashen, W. 2005 *The Strengths Approach*, St Lukes Innovative Resources, Bendigo Victoria

The National SAAP Case Management Working Group, 1999, *Case management resource kit for Indigenous SAAP services*, Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services