



Social and Cultural Resilience and Emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal Mothers in prison Newsletter

Newsletter 2

April 2013

Editorial

Welcome to the second Social and Cultural Resilience and Emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal Mothers in prison newsletter.

We are now in the data collection phase of the research in both hubs, so it's a good time to run through our updates both nationally and hub-specific. The team has a number of outcomes to report since our last Newsletter.

Team Update

Associate Investigator Dr Devon Indig has left the project to pursue a new role with Breast Screen NSW. Devon was a vital member who provided great assistance with connecting us to Justice Health NSW and Corrective Service NSW personnel. Her strong expertise in the area of Aboriginal Men and Women's health research was invaluable.

Research Associate in NSW, Ms Lise Lafferty, has been successful in her application to commence her PhD Candidature with UNSW Medicine. Lise will continue working on the project one day per week as she pursues further studies. She can be reached on Wednesdays, alternatively, please contact Dr Sacha Kendall (s.kendall@unsw.edu.au) other days. We wish Lise all the best with her studies.

NSW Update

The NSW hub hosted its first NSW Advisory Group meeting on 10 September 2012 at the National Centre for Indigenous Excellence in Redfern. The meeting was attended by members representing government and non-government organisations as well as Aboriginal-specific services in the Metropolitan Sydney area.

Advisory members who could not attend were contacted before and after the meeting to ensure that they had an opportunity to participate in the process. We look forward to engaging with all of our Advisory Group members and stakeholders in 2013 and throughout the data collection phase.

The consultation phase of the project so far has been very beneficial in that we have been given vital advice and had a lot of knowledge shared with us from many organisations and communities across the state. These opportunities of meeting with all of you have enabled us as a team to develop a strong framework for building the next stage of this project. We are again very appreciative of the time and knowledge you have provided and shared with us. As a result of this strong support and advice, the development and completion of all ethics submissions was successful and this has meant that we can proceed with Phase 2 of the project. We now have ethics approval from the following committees:

- Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council (AH&MRC)
- Corrective Services NSW
- Justice Health NSW
- University of NSW
- University of Technology Sydney

Data collection in the prisons commenced in March. This process has been a dream because of the support we have been given by NSW Corrections Services staff. In particular we would like to thank Deirdre Hyslop (Principal Advisor Women Offenders), Lena Wotherspoon (of the Aboriginal Support and Planning Unit) and Vivian Scott (Regional Aboriginal Project Officer).

We would also like to make a special mention of the excellent work undertaken by the Aboriginal Inmate Delegates who have ensured each Aboriginal woman at each prison was informed about the project. This has made our process very fluid and that the women are well prepared to participate in both the surveys and in-depth interviews we have started to undertake. The feedback from the women about both processes has been very positive.

At the end of 2012 Juanita Sherwood spoke to Justice Health NSW staff at Long Bay Correctional Centre and presented at the Mental Health and Children of Prisoners Forum (Mental Health Coordinating Council, Sydney). We look forward to sharing information with our Advisory Group members and stakeholders throughout 2013.

WA Update

Since the previous newsletter, the WA-end has commenced fieldwork in the prisons. Over three days in November 2012, the researchers (Jocelyn Jones, Mandy Wilson and local Aboriginal Research Assistant, Cathy Garlett) conducted a pilot in Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women. The researchers presented the project to six women and the following day began to pilot interviews; three full interviews were completed and the women's feedback collated and presented to the wider team. Gaining the women's feedback was an important step in ensuring the interview schedule was culturally safe for participants and as a result of the feedback process, several questions were revised or removed and further questions added to the questionnaire.

It is important to note that the team has experienced lengthy delays as a result of a newly implemented Risk Assessment Procedure within Corrective Services. This process requires a detailed risk assessment to be drafted, negotiated and signed off with each individual prison where the research is conducted. This is done by an assigned person within Corrective Services and the prison Superintendents in each site. This agreement ensures that the relevant services operating in the prison are aware of the research and agree on processes to be followed if a participant is identified as being at risk and need of care. This has been taking time.

However, despite these delays the first interviews were conducted with women in Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison in early February 2013. The researchers (Jocelyn Jones and Cathy Garlett) interviewed nine women. A further 15 interviews were conducted by the researchers (Jocelyn Jones, Mandy Wilson and Cathy Garlett) in Greenough Regional Prison in March 2013. Next Jocelyn Jones and Mandy Wilson will be heading up to the West Kimberly Regional Prison in Derby in April and this will be followed by interviews at Bandyup Women's Prison, the main receiving and releasing prison for women in WA.

Other news at the WA end is the acceptance of a paper at the National Indigenous Health Conference to be held in Cairns in November. Jocelyn Jones and Mandy Wilson will present on the consultation process and how this has influenced research process. Thanks to Marisa Gilles for helping to prepare the successful abstract. Lastly, due to their work on the Aboriginal mothers in prison, Jocelyn Jones and Mandy Wilson have been invited to participate on a working party set up to review progress made on recommendations from a 1994 West Australian Gender Bias Taskforce (further information can be found at: http://www.wlwa.asn.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=22&Itemid=116). The subcommittee of which they will be a part will review Chapter Nine, 'Punishment of Women'.

Thank you...

The team gratefully acknowledges the participation of Aboriginal women and mothers in custody. These women not only give their time but contribute greatly to the research through sharing their personal stories and experiences with us.

Our sincerest of thanks to the many women participating in the research, the staff who generously provide support and assistance, our stakeholders and our Advisory Groups.