

## Females 'behaving badly': violence, substance use and involvement with the criminal justice system

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## *The experiences of Aboriginal girls and young women around fighting, alcohol and offending (YAWG)*

Perth-based partnership between NDRI and Wungening Aboriginal Corporation (formerly the Aboriginal Alcohol and Drug Service)

- **Mandy Wilson (Curtin)**, Jocelyn Jones, Julia Butt, Daniel Morrison, Ted Wilkes

## *Aboriginal Mothers in Prison project*

National partnership between researchers in NSW and WA

- **Elizabeth Sullivan (UTS)**, Juanita Sherwood, Eileen Baldry, Tony Butler, Jocelyn Jones, Marisa Gilles, Michael Levy, Mandy Wilson, Sacha Kendall, Lise Lafferty.

## *Beyond Violence project*

An international partnership between Australian and North American researchers

- **Tony Butler (UNSW)**, Sheryl Kubiak, Peter Schofield, Mandy Wilson, Emma Barrett, Jocelyn Jones, Azar Kariminia, Elizabeth Sullivan, Kimberlie Dean

## Acknowledgements:

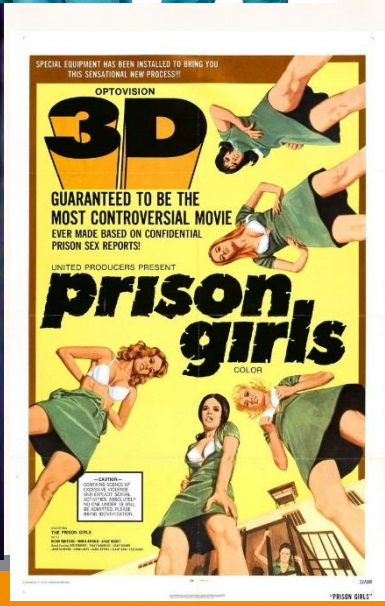
The Aboriginal mothers in prison and Beyond Violence projects received funding from the NHMRC

The experiences of Aboriginal girls and young women around fighting, alcohol and offending (YAWG) is funded by Healthway

Ethics was received from West Australian Aboriginal Human Ethics Committee (WAAHEC), Curtin University Human Research and Ethics Committee and Department of Justice Research Applications and Advisory Committee

Special mention goes to the stakeholders involved in the YAWG project, the Aboriginal Mothers in Prison and those currently involved with the Beyond Violence project, including the Department of Justice (Western Australia), the girls and women participating in interviews and our research assistants.

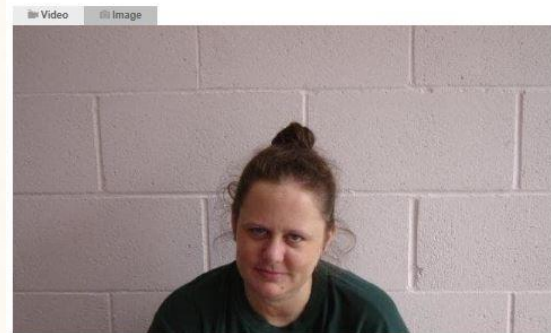
- *The researchers publicly state that material contained in this presentation cannot be considered as either endorsed by the Department of Justice or an expression of the policies or view of the Department of Justice. The authors publicly state that any errors of omission or commission are the responsibility of the researchers.*



## Australia's most dangerous women inmates

THEY are among the most dangerous women in prison and authorities don't know how to cope

Candace Sutton



The most violent prisoner in Australia is Rebecca Butterfield who has killed an inmate, stabbing officers and is a chronic self-harmer. Source: Supplied

WARNING: Disturbing content.

INSIDE Australia's toughest women's prison a banging sound was coming from

country's most violent inmate.

officer on the wing of the self-harm unit went to investigate and

## Australia must address soaring female Indigenous imprisonment rate - report

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are the fastest growing segment of the prisoner population and it is preventing progress in other areas



Over-represented and overlooked:

the crisis of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's over-imprisonment

A report by the Human Rights Law Centre and the Change the Record Coalition says rates of female Indigenous imprisonment have increased 248% since 1991. Photograph: Lukas Coch/AAP

Australia needs to address the skyrocketing rate of imprisonment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women if it hopes to meet other Closing the Gap targets, a new report has said.

## Girl fights: Are Aussie women becoming more violent?

By Antoinette Lattour

Updated 18 Mar 2016, 6:23am

Public brawls, teenage gangs and some awkward hair-pulling incidents. What's going on with Australian women?

A quick glance of news headlines and Facebook feeds containing graphic stories or videos of women beating each other up would suggest there has been a serious escalation of violence among females in this country.

On Tuesday, a girl-on-girl fighting story made headlines after security and mobile phone vision was released of women involved in a brawl at a Sydney racecourse.

A few weeks ago, footage emerged of a 13-year-old girl being attacked by a group of female teens at a western Sydney train station.

Earlier this month, a vicious Melbourne schoolyard scrap between three female students was filmed. The savage beating was captured by a fellow student, posted on Facebook and viewed tens of thousands of times.

In January, Queensland Police Senior Constable



PHOTO: A fight between two girls in Kalgoorlie, WA, that was recorded and published on social media. (YouTube)

## Violent crimes committed by teenage girls have surged in NSW

Rosemarie Lentini, DailyTelegraph

January 8, 2012 9:00pm



One of the more dramatic true crime tales of the late colonial period, is the story of Louisa Collins. Caroline Overington looks at the life, and death, of Collins in *Last Woman Hanged* (2014). Accused of murder, Collins famously endured four trials in 1888, which, as Overington argues, were effectively trials of all Australian women. If women wanted equal rights, including the right to vote, "then, such equality had to be universal: women, too, would hang for murder". In the first three trials, the juries failed to deliver a verdict. In the fourth trial, the jury found her guilty and Collins was hanged in 1889.

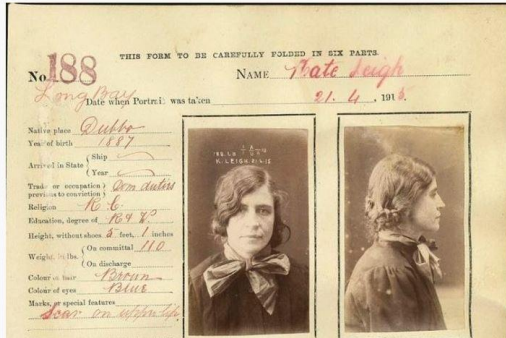


PHOTO: Kate Leigh's mugshots and prison form. (State Archives of New South Wales)

The *Worst Woman in Sydney* (2016) by Leigh Straw documents the life of Kate Leigh, born Kathleen Beahan, an icon of Sydney's underworld from the 1920s through to the 1950s. A "famed brothel madam, sly-grog seller and drug dealer", she is best known for her involvement in the "Razor Wars" when Sydney gangs used razors instead of guns.

## Number of women in jail in NSW soars and reoffending may be to blame

There was a 50% jump in six years in women inmates, with the increase more dramatic in the Indigenous population



A NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research report found 'significant increases in female offenders who have multiple prior court appearances'. Photograph: Jonny Weeks for the Guardian

A dramatic increase in repeat offending may partly be responsible for a 50% jump in the number of female inmates being held in NSW prisons over the past six years.

# Women involved with the criminal justice system in Australia

## Community corrections:

- Women comprise approximately 20% of adults on community-based orders;
- In the past five years, there has been an increase of 42% among women on community-based orders (compared to 26% among males) (ABS, 2018).

## Prisons:

- Women comprise approximately 8% of the *total* Australian prisoner population (ABS, 2017);
- Between 2013-2018, female incarceration rates increased by 53% (compared to 37% among males) (ABS, 2018);
- In WA, between June 2007 and June 2016, the number of females in prison increased by 87% compared to 60% among males (Clare, 2017).



Women are one of the fastest growing group in Australian prisons (behind remand and Indigenous prisoners).

# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in Australian prisons

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander\* women comprise **2%** of the adult female population in Australia and **36%** of the adult female prison population (ABS, 2017);
- In Western Australia, Aboriginal women make up approximately **3%** of the adult female population, but **47%** of women in prison (ABS, 2017).



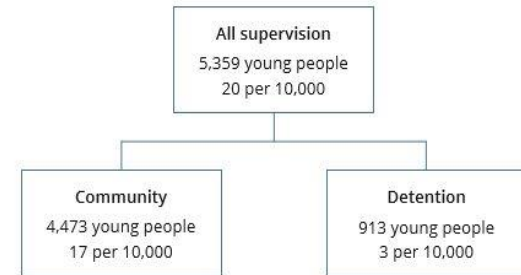
For the rest of this presentation, when we speak of Aboriginal people, we include those who identify as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

Image via [sbs.com.au/nitv](https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv)

# Youth justice in Australia

- In 2016–17, 5,359 young people aged >10 were under youth justice supervision in Australia;
- Five percent of young people aged 10-17 are Aboriginal, yet they comprise over 50% of those under supervision on an average day;
- Aboriginal young people are **24 x** more likely to be in detention and **17 x** more likely to be under community-based supervision;
- Girls and young women account for 9% of those in detention and 20% of those supervised in the community. Of these 52% were Aboriginal (AIHW, 2018).

Figure 2.1: Young people under supervision on an average day, by supervision type, 2016–17



Sources: Tables S1a, S4a, S36a, S39a, S74a, and S77a.



# Characteristics of female offenders

- Female offenders comprise a vulnerable population characterised by high rates of:
  - previous childhood neglect;
  - poverty and under-employment;
  - family dysfunction;
  - trauma;
  - substance use;
  - sexual and physical abuse; and,
  - violent victimisation as adults (including interpersonal and intimate partner violence in particular).

# Women convicted of or awaiting sentencing for violent offences

- Over the decade 2006-2016 in Australia the number of women sentenced for a violent offence has increased by more than 50% (ABS, 2017).
- In 2017, 40% of women in Australian prisons were convicted of, or awaiting sentencing for, violent offences (ABS, 2017).
- Aboriginal women overrepresented in these statistics – 52% incarcerated for violent offences compared to 33% among non-Aboriginal women (ABS, 2017).

## Violent offence:

Includes those offences committed against a person and which fall into six broad divisions and subcategories –

- Homicide and related offences;
- Acts intended to cause injury;
- Sexual assault and related offences;
- Dangerous or negligent acts endangering persons;
- Abduction, harassment and other offences against the person;
- Robbery, extortion and related offences (ANZSOC, 2011).

# Females being violent?

- Women's violence has traditionally been ignored, constructed as relational and indirect, sexualised or trivialised;
- Overlooks women's involvement in physical violence for reasons such as self-defence, resistance, survival, power, pleasure, respect and status (Carrington, 2013).



# Women's use of violence

- Likely to have experienced childhood abuse, to suffer from a range of mental health issues, to have past experiences of trauma and been witness to violence, and to have substance use problems (Swan, et al. 2008);
- Often qualitatively different from the violence used by men (less likely to cause injury, less likely to be used to control/dominate);
- More likely to know their victim and frequently, but not always, to be in response to their partner's on-going and sustained abuse (Swan, et al. 2008; Miller & Meloy, 2006);
- Even in so-called 'mutually violent' relationships (where both parties use violence), women experience graver detrimental effects such as physical injury, depression and anxiety (Swan, et al., 2008);
- The prevalence and characteristics of violence used by girls and women may differ according to ethnicity or minority-group membership (Jones, 2008; Swan, 2005; Wilson, et al. 2017).

# Violence

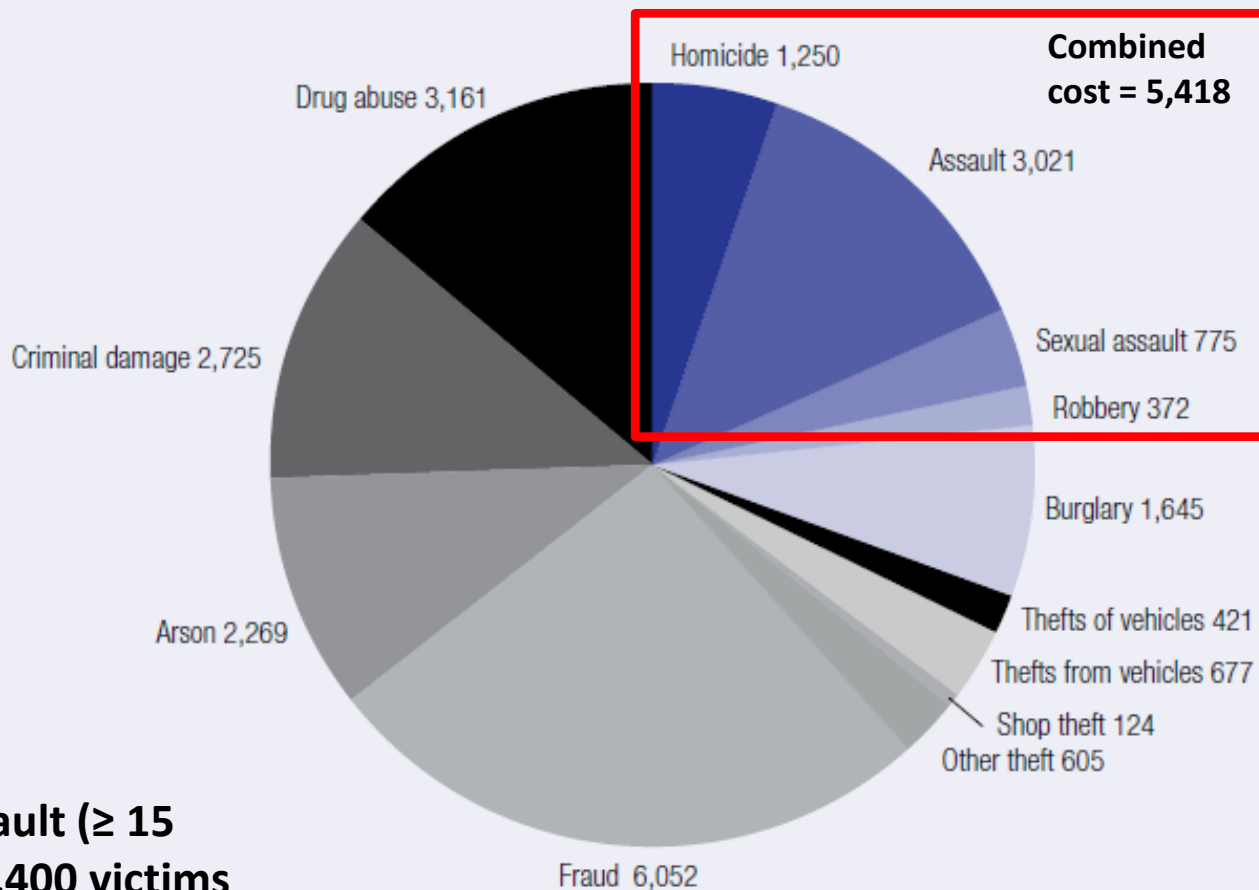
- Violence is a priority (but neglected) public health issue;
- Besides fatal and non-fatal injury, it has been associated with mental health problems (depression, anxiety, suicide), drug use, and social impacts such as poverty and homelessness (Dahlberg, et al., 2002);
- Significant costs associated with community violence;
- The negative impacts are far-reaching for victims, families and the wider community, and place enormous pressure on justice, health and social welfare systems.



Credit: the Counting Dead Women Australia researchers of Destroy The Joint

# Costs of individual types of crime, 2011

**Figure 1** Estimated cost of individual crime types (\$m)



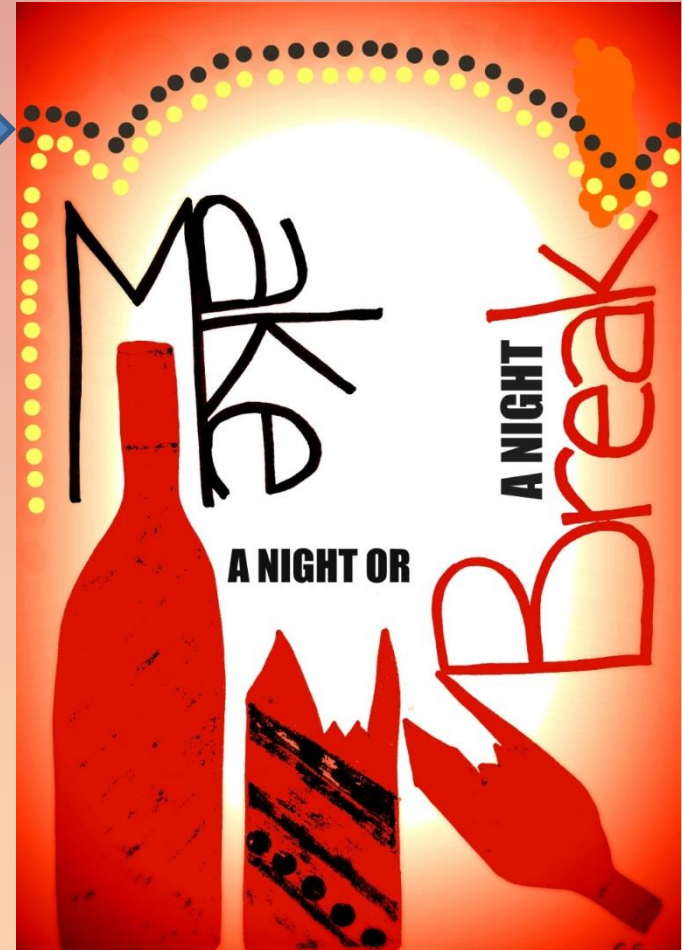
**Victims of assault ( $\geq 15$  years) = 1,093,400 victims (2011-12)**

Smith, et al., (2014)

# The YAWG project

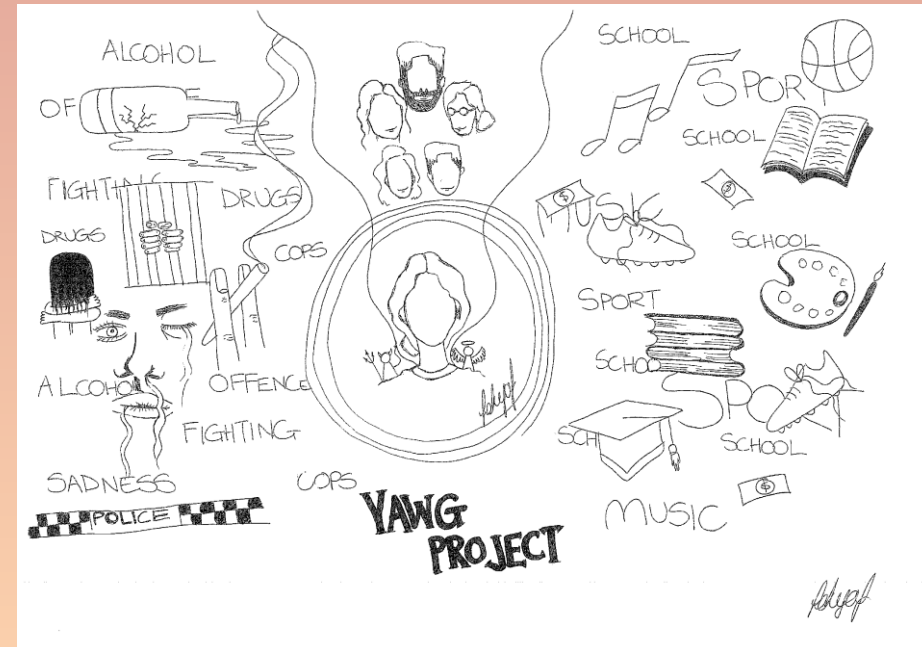
# Background

- The idea for YAWG came from 'Drinking in the suburbs: the experiences of young Aboriginal people' (later renamed 'It can make a night, break a night');
- Young people talked about being involved in fighting, drinking and offending;
- Differences in experiences of males (n=19) and females (n=13);
- Service providers and community wanted to know more about the lives of the girls and young women and how to help them.



# Phases -

1. Qualitative interviews with 38 girls and young women (10-18 years) shared their stories;
2. One-day intensive workshop with six young women;
3. Development of a training resource/package to be launched and evaluated.



# Phase One

Interviews with Aboriginal girls and young women around drinking, offending and fighting

# What our data show (a condensed version)

## *Alcohol/drinking:*

- Most had tried alcohol before 18 years of age;
  - Most drank with family members and at home, on trains or at parties;
  - Of those people participants admired, many were non-drinkers;
  - Good nights meant no fights;
  - Bad nights drinking –included sexual assault, fights, having sex and regretting later, hangovers, stealing.
- *I don't want to do alcohol it causes so much trouble and family fights and like 'cause you know people don't remember what happened but the other person does and then like that gets all mixed up (17 years).*
  - *The best time was at my other auntie's house. We got really drunk that night. That was a good time. We drank 'til like two in the morning and there was lots of dancing (14 years)*

## Crime:

Low-level involvement with police (being out after curfew and stealing offences), with a small number having more serious involvement;

Spoke about family members who had been involved in crime and some had experienced the loss of a family member (mother, father, sibling) to incarceration;

Participants spoke about run-ins with transit officers, mainly due to not having a ticket, with some saying they felt targeted by officers for being Aboriginal.



*Nah I've never been in trouble with the law. I actually want to become a police officer (15 years).*

*I turned sixteen in there [Banksia Hill Detention Centre]. And then I turned seventeen in Banksia. But I had Christmas in Banksia last year but I got out before Christmas this year (17 years).*

*I was in the city getting chased by police, getting, doing aggravated robbery with intent to, aggravated robbery, no aggravated assault with attempted robbery (13 years).*

## Fighting:

The majority had been in a fight or seen one;

Most fights were with other girls and young women, usually other Aboriginal girls;

Generally minor physical injuries (with a few exceptions);

Some said they were shame about fighting, but it depended on what the other girl had done.

Alcohol not always involved.

Key reasons for why girls fight -

- Jealousy/fighting over boys
- Defending/protecting family \*
- Yarn carrying
- Looking at them the 'wrong way' or name-calling
- Reputation, being a 'big shot'

*Just we were just pissed off at each other and then I threw a punch 'cause yeah I get really angry easy and I can't control my anger sometimes.*

*(16 years).*

*The number one rule when somebody gets in an argument, you cannot tell the teachers 'cause teachers just blow it out of proportion like they're gonna have a fight, they think like way over when it's just an argument (13 years).*

*Yeah just fists and hair pulling (16 years)*



*You only want him 'cause I want him  
Back off, girl, or else  
Girl fight tonight!*

*Fantastic Four #332 (November 1989), written by "John Harkness" (Steve Englehart); art by Rich Buckler, Romeo Tanghal, and George Roussos; letters by Bill Oakley*

# Injuries

- I didn't do anything too bad I think they just had to, um their head got split open when they hit the concrete.
- I pulled him [brother] off my bed 'cause he was standing back and then he pushed me over and then stomped on my head and so I had to go to hospital ... I lost half my memory and then everything else, so I don't really remember much ... I had gone temporarily blind, couldn't move my jaw and I lost half my memory.
- I got mobbed one night on the train. About ten, eleven girls. Yeah they jumped all over my head. Oh I had, my head got split open. Yeah, um I busted my arm real bad, I had two black eyes, my lip was busted, that was split all the way across. Yeah. That's about it.
- Yeah I said, girl you don't even know me to go call me a slut so and she thought it was funny so then I booted her in the head.
- We was both fighting and then she like pulled me onto the ground and then I got on top of her and I noticed like a lot of blood and then like I got up, snapped myself out of it but like I actually am really temperamental. I actually get it from my dad and when I snap it's just like blank and I like and then I saw like a lot of blood and I just stopped. Then she like tried to get up and still fight me.

# Phase Two

Workshop with six young Aboriginal women

**Adversity did not always dictate high risk behaviour around drinking, fighting & offending or determine their ability to make positive choices in their lives**

**Meeting for the first time**

**half participated in YAWG interviews**

**Experienced caring responsibilities for younger siblings at some point**

**2/3 had had involvement with welfare system  
Ages 16-18 years old**



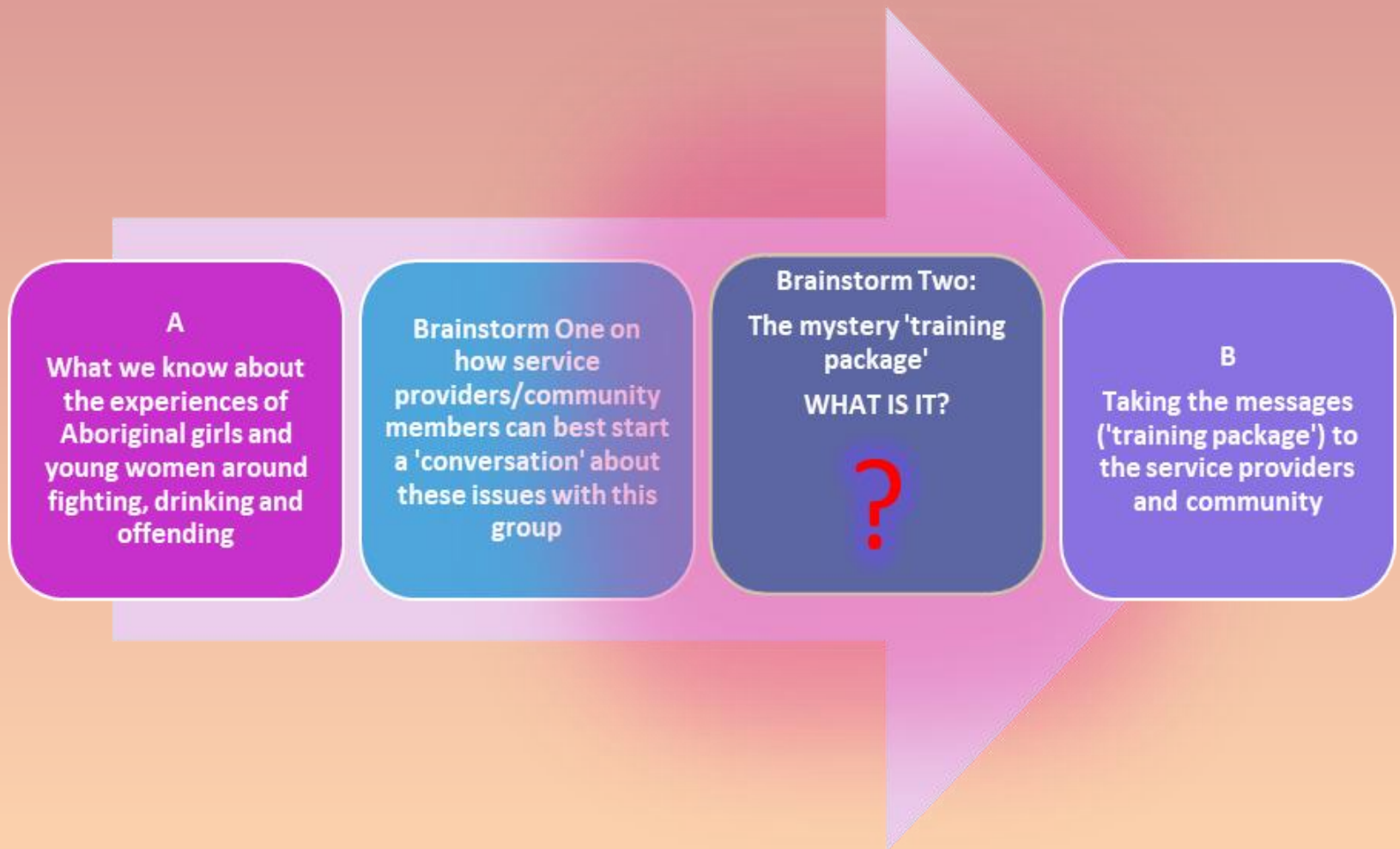
**Grief, loss and experiences of trauma quite common (death of family member, incarceration of parent, family violence and IPV, divorce and alcohol/drug abuse)**

**Identify their strongest influencers to be their family**

**Employed, recently graduated or studying fulltime**

**Affected by racism at some point in their lives**

**From single/separated parent families and/or living with extended family**



- We want to get from A to B – how do we get there → what is the mystery training package?

## Dealing with emotions/feelings and negative issues

**“It’s just who I am.. I don’t know, I don’t care – I’m just like cool – if that’s how you feel, that’s how you feel! I’m still going to be myself, I’m not going to change for you!”**

**“You’re just taught to get your anger out physically”**

**“Issues ‘come up’ in arguments, you never sit down (to talk it out).”**

**“Some families just don’t really talk about ‘stuff’ emotions and feelings – it just gets glazed over.”**

**“That’s how I think most of us deal with it – I can’t see myself sitting down and be like – ‘this is what’s wrong, this is how we’re going to sort it out, this is how it’s going to happen’, that’s not how it works.”**

**“I was the same – I don’t know why I would do it” (It’s a defence mechanism) “I just find that if I fight straight away, then everything just stops, like right there and then there’s no more drama for that situation from there – like really bad physical fights – I’m not proud of the stuff I did back then when I was younger and stupid (14-16y) – I pulled my head in at 17 when I lost my Nan – Nan taught me to not be the Aboriginal stereotype. Try to change – don’t be like your cousins, they’re going in a bad way.”**

## **We asked why Aboriginal girls and young women may not be reaching out for help ...**

**“People are unaware of what’s available to them re: support services – so they bottle it all up and keep doing what they’ve been doing – because they don’t know where to get help.”**

**“We don’t want to talk to people who ‘have to’ listen.. who are getting paid to listen – who don’t actually want to help you.”**

**“A belief system of not being able to change your circumstances unless you’re older.”**

**“They may feel there’s no one to reach out to, no one will really understand where they’re coming from or be able to relate to what they’ve been through/are going through in life.”**

**“No one takes it seriously, they just think it’s a typical Aboriginal thing.”**

What would make some girls reach out/when might they reach out?

“To **protect** their younger **siblings.**”

“When they’ve run out of **choices.**”

“They might want **to get out** of that environment.”

# What's the worst that could happen if you do actually reach out?

**“People talk – like the counsellor knew my mum and spoke to her - it actually made it worse for me.”**

**“No one actually takes you seriously – there's nothing you can do about it.”**

*“I've avoided talking to the school psychologist because it – sends like, red flags to welfare and stuff and I've already been through the system, so say if I went and asked for help, I feel like my school would've blown it way out of proportion and welfare would of got involved and it just would have made things way worse.”*

**“No one wants to be taken away from their siblings and family.”**

## Lack of Understanding (support service unaware of my reality)

**Trauma** (older generations experiences & fears passed onto younger generations, their own traumatic experiences using services)

Only being spoken to when in trouble (lack of rapport building)

*No one to relate to in advertising/media*

# Trust

Access (lengthy waiting lists for mental health services)

Biggest issues with using services..

## Racial stereo-types

‘Text book’ support (lack of flexibility)

Having to tell their story over and over again to different people consistency with support staff/retention/turnover

**Fear of welfare system – being taken away from family**

**Safe spaces** (lack of)

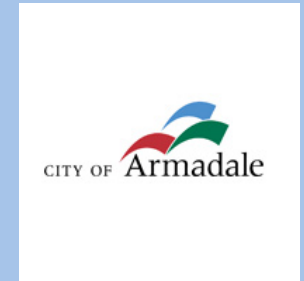
Attitudes of some support services

Being given openings to reach out at anytime and taught tools to use during tough times to manage emotions and choices made a difference ...

**'I want to acknowledge that you're all humans and that you are here to learn!'**

'They should be asking why it happened – what causes it – looking behind the actual picture' 'What's going on at home – but kind of not being direct about it' So just listening? 'Yeah' 'or how do we prevent you from having another fight?'

'Yeah, I had a lot of fights at school – then my school counsellor would notice that every time (the fights would happen) something at home was happening – so she goes “well every time something at home happens, you come to me first, sit down in my office, relax ... and then you go to class – and then as soon as you feel like you're going to get angry, you come to me and we'll go for a walk” – I had a good school counsellor and that's what helped me a lot.'



CHAMPION CENTRE



The workshop was held upstairs at the Foyer Oxford in November 2017 and generous DONATIONS received from these organisations and services for our goodie bags.

# The Social and Cultural Resilience and Emotional Wellbeing of Aboriginal Mothers in Prison

- National partnership between researchers in NSW and WA
- Aim to focus on the health and well-being of Aboriginal mothers in prison in NSW and WA
- Mixed methods project comprising in-depth interviews, and standardised measures covering SEWB and health
- Participants – incarcerated Aboriginal mothers, custodial officers, prison health services staff, stakeholders.



# Aboriginal mums in WA prisons

## 84 mothers interviewed:

- Women had 285 children in total (biological and children they had raised). Sixty per cent had  $\geq 3$  children
- Two-thirds of mothers had one or more dependent child in their care on incarceration

### *Key findings:*

- Women felt disconnected from children and family - support to remain connected and re-establish connection with children, both in prison and on return to community
- Significant level of high-risk alcohol use (and to a lesser extent illicit drug use) and involvement of alcohol in offending behaviour
- Urgent need for housing, including transitional housing for women with AoD issues or seeking additional support to reintegrate into the community
- **High level of violence experienced by the women and lack of programs in prison and the community.**

**Being in here, it's restricted me from just doing what I normally do and waiting for the chance just to be a mum again. I mean I'm still a mum, I know, but when I don't have my kids with me, I feel helpless (Ba, 31 years).**



## Our research and where it has led

### Aboriginal mums in prison project

### Beyond Violence



- Aboriginal women are 34 times more likely than non-Aboriginal women to have been hospitalised as a result of injuries caused by assault
- 10 times more likely to die from their injuries (Kariminia, et al., 2012).

### Consequences of using violence:

- Incarceration
- Losing children to DCP
- Morbidity and mortality
- Parole denial

## Experiences of violence: Aboriginal mothers in prison

*I got charged for assault. They're saying that I assaulted this guy, but I threw a can at him 'cos he grabbed my niece and he started scruffing my niece in the liquor store ... I shouldn't have been in prison because I've been through domestic violence for 15 years so if I see a man scruffing a woman, I'm going to try and help (Boronia, 39 years).*

*My partner was abusing me a lot. Even when I was pregnant I was getting a hiding a lot of the time ... that's why I turned around and started stabbing him because I had nobody there to help me and he was abusing me and hitting me when I was pregnant and all (Greenough Regional Prison, 24 years).*

*My partner [used violence] sometimes, not all the time, just now and again when he'd get too done [drunk], but then I was just as bad because I'd already been through so much with my father. I'd been getting flogged all my life by him and plus watching my mum get flogged. There was no way I was going to stand back and let a man flog me, so I gave just as much as he tried to give (Bandyup Women's Prison, 32 years).*

## Key points specific to the WA-context

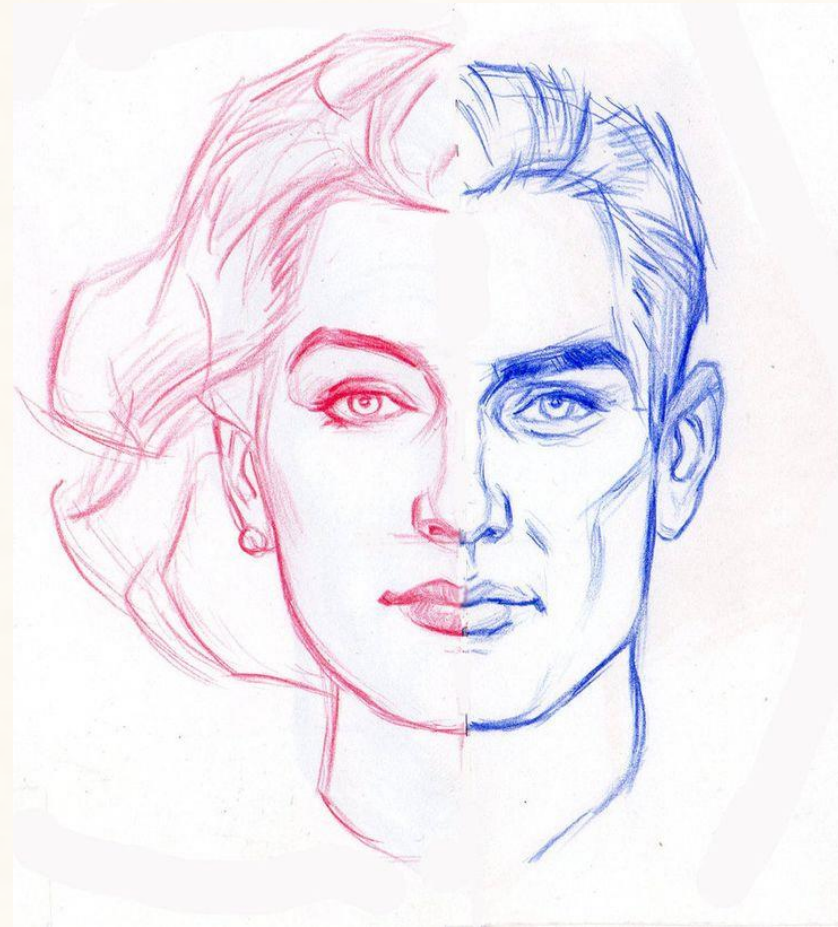
- Few in our sample had spoken to anyone about the violence they had used against others and none reported completing a targeted violent-offender program, in prison or in the community, despite a desire to do so.
- The absence of such a program for women was noted in the 2011 and 2014 reports of the inspection of Bandyup Women's Prison by the WA Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (OICS).

**“few treatment options available for female offenders”  
and “no treatment programs for women who were either  
sexual offenders or were assessed as requiring high  
intensity treatment for violent offences” (OICS, 2011)**

## An overlooked population

The specific needs of **female prisoners** have historically been neglected in policy initiatives and research or assumed to be the **same as those of male prisoners**, impeding the development of evidence-based responses to female offending (Jeglic, 2011; Kubiak, 2014).

*“Women in minority groups are likely to be particularly badly affected by weaknesses in the provision of specialist, gender-specific, culturally appropriate, local services” (Covington, in-press).*



# Programs for addressing women's violence?

## In general:

- Few studies have investigated the efficacy of prison-based violence intervention prevention programs;
- Few, if any, empirically tested interventions have been specifically designed for the population of women convicted of violent offences (Kubiak et al., 2012)

## In prisons in Australia – GAP IDENTIFIED:

- Few programs for women in the prisons, long waiting lists
- Programs that do exist are often designed for and available to men/gender neutral or local to one prison/area



*'Our ability to design appropriate treatment and prevention programming is limited by our inadequate knowledge of the aetiology of female aggression' (Dowd 2013)*

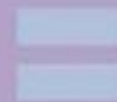
# Narratives for change?



<http://superheroesincolor.tumblr.com/post/105129699750/yes-comics-can-empower-black>

# Phase Three - YAWG

Development of resource package for service providers

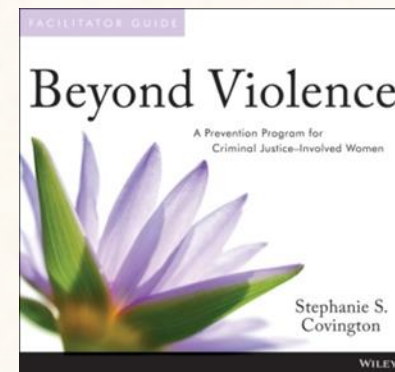


# The search for programs ... and what occurred next

## *Beyond Violence*

### Beyond Violence (Covington, 2013):

- Targeted 40 hour **violence prevention, mental health and substance use** intervention for incarcerated female offenders;
- Trauma informed, gender-specific;
- Privileges women's experiences of **victimisation**, their social roles as **women** in their communities, **substance use** and/or **mental health** issues;
- Uses evidence-based therapeutic strategies (i.e., psycho-education, role playing, mindfulness activities, cognitive-behavioral restructuring and grounding skills for trauma triggers).



Developed and submitted an application to the National Health and Medical Research Council in partnership with leading offender health researchers in NSW and North America = **SUCCESSFUL**

# BV RCT trial outcomes in the US

## *Comparison between groups: 12 month recidivism data*

Group	Number	Return to prison	Any arrest	Any jail	Total
Treatment as usual	16	0	6 (37.5%)	8 (50%)	14
Beyond Violence	19	0	2 (10.5%)	3 (15.8%)	5

**The odds of women in the BV condition recidivating [contact with CJS after release] decreased by 79% compared to the rate for women in the TAU condition (Kubiak et al., 2016).**

**Short-term pre- post-test outcomes showed that those in the BV group experienced statistically significant reductions in measures of anxiety and anger, compared to the TAU group (Kubiak, et al. 2014).**

## Aims of the BV research in Australia

- *Primary aim: Evaluate the effectiveness* of Beyond Violence in *reducing recidivism* among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women with a current and/or historical convictions for a violent offence.
- *Secondary aim: Examine the effectiveness* of Beyond Violence on 3, 9 and 15 month measures of (a) *depression*; (b) *symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)*; (c) *anger*; and (d) *substance use* in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women with current and/or historic convictions for a violent offence.

# Implementation

- **Study design and population:** The proposed study is a before-and-after trial, conducted over five years designed to measure the effectiveness of BV;
- **Sites:** The trial will take place in 2 women's correctional centres in WA (n=208, 104 TAU and 104 experimental) and 2 in NSW (n=206);
- **Experimental group (BV):** will receive 20x2 hour sessions of BV over 10 weeks in groups of between 8-11 women. The intervention will be provided by facilitators (one Aboriginal and one non-Aboriginal woman) trained by a certified BV facilitator.
- **Treatment as usual group (TAU):** Will comprise women who meet the inclusion criteria who may participate in other programs offered in the prison setting.

# Significance

- **One of the first of its kind in Australia** to implement and rigorously evaluate a violence prevention intervention to reduce recidivism, enhance mental well-being, and reduce problematic substance use among women prisoners with histories of violence;
- In WA, it costs \$237 per day to keep an individual in prison compared to \$39 to manage an offender in the community (RoGS, 2018). If BV is successful in reducing recidivism among female offenders, it will be **highly cost-effective**;
- The imprisonment of mothers impacts disproportionately on families and communities as they are the **main carers of children** in their communities, particularly Aboriginal women.
- Returning and keeping women in their communities will **likely improve health and social outcomes for these communities and for future generations.**



# Current status

- Baseline assessment interviews have been **completed with 81 women** in TAU group;
- **Facilitator training** of the BV program has been delivered;
- Formation of **Aboriginal women's working party** (led by chief investigator, Jocelyn Jones) to modify the program to ensure it is culturally safe for Aboriginal women, i.e. inclusion of historical context (stolen generation, dispossession, missions etc.), updated statistics, impact of incarceration on women/mothers, Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing, intergenerational trauma, concepts of violence and so on;
- Baseline assessments to be conducted at a **regional site** in the next 2-3 months; and,
- Planned **roll-out of BV** program in final quarter of 2018;
- Well received in NSW – in **discussion with CSNSW**.



QUESTIONS?

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The story behind the 'Aboriginal mothers in prison' project logo

The larger hand on the image belongs to the artist, Natalie Taylor, who was in WA's Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women in Perth, Western Australia. The child's hand reaching out to hers belongs to her two year old Granny (her niece's son). He was born in Bandyup Women's Prison and now resides at Boronia with his mother. Natalie explained that in prison she's getting the chance to look after her niece's child, something she didn't get to do with her children on the outside.

The foot-prints on the logo are the feet of the older children who lead and look after the 'littler ones'. The U-shaped symbols represent the women and mothers of these children. Relating to home, are the swirls of the waterholes and Natalie has drawn tracks leading from one waterhole to another. Despite having been incarcerated multiple times she is connected to her country and people. She tells the story of her Granny who, rather than following Boronia's concrete paths, weaves his way through the beautifully manicured garden beds; "a true Nyungar", she laughs.

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