

# **Involving Aboriginal clients in DFV service evaluation [and planning]: Lessons learned from a 3-site research project**

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(with Dr Judy Putt, Cath O'Leary, Kate Csillag, Robyn Sirr and Jennifer Cooke,  
Jane Lloyd, and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women in Alice Springs,  
Canberra and the NPY Lands)



# Acknowledgements

- Pay my respect to Australia's First Nations Peoples depth, breadth and richness of knowledge.
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# Social/human services

- What ‘works’?
- What is ‘effective’?

# Research partners: women's specialist DFV services

Alice Springs Women's Shelter (NT)

Domestic Violence Crisis Service (ACT)

Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara  
Women's Council Family and Domestic  
Violence Service (NPYWC FDVS)  
(NT/SA/WA)

## Research collaborators: Aboriginal service users, community members, staff & Board members

- Aboriginal Board members involved in planning, formally liaised with NPYWC Board members and CEO; also interviews & workshop involvement
- Aboriginal staff involved in the design and development of tools (ASWS)
- Senior Aboriginal women workshopped key concepts and issues (NPYWC)
- Koori researcher assisted with interviews and focus groups (DVCS)
- Actively sought out Aboriginal women clients/ex-clients to participate in focus groups/interviews
- Interviewed Aboriginal women employed in related services

# A 'research community'



# A research collaboration

- What is involved?
- Who is involved?
- What does involvement look like?
- How is this ‘research’?
- What are the benefits and limits of ‘collaboration’?

## GOALS

→ sense of what we need to contribute to the project (data)

→ most useful for us.

→ good practice > justifying its value

→ our strengths and our differences - overlap + mutual learning

→ context related ??

**Workshopping  
focus, scope &  
methods**



- advocacy (whose role & what to do)

→ what would the women like to know.

→ how to engage with them.

→ better overview of how the research might occur.

value.

→ how to keep it simple and accessible relevant.

→ processes + methods of evaluation.

→ how to use workshop findings for advocacy; to change the way Govt works with us.

## DVCS

Court Advocacy Program CAP

- Protection Orders
- Assisting women to give evidence

2 FTE

Case tracking  
- updates, safety plans, services, support

1 FTE

Community Education  
fee for svc

2015/16  
Partnership with ABCP

Crisis Intervention

- 24/7 phone (accident & injury)
- attendance with ACT at incidents (1 hour fee)
- non-polling F2F on disability

8 FTE

Young People Outreach Program (YPOP)

5-12 yr where there has been violence long term therapeutic

2 FTE

Support

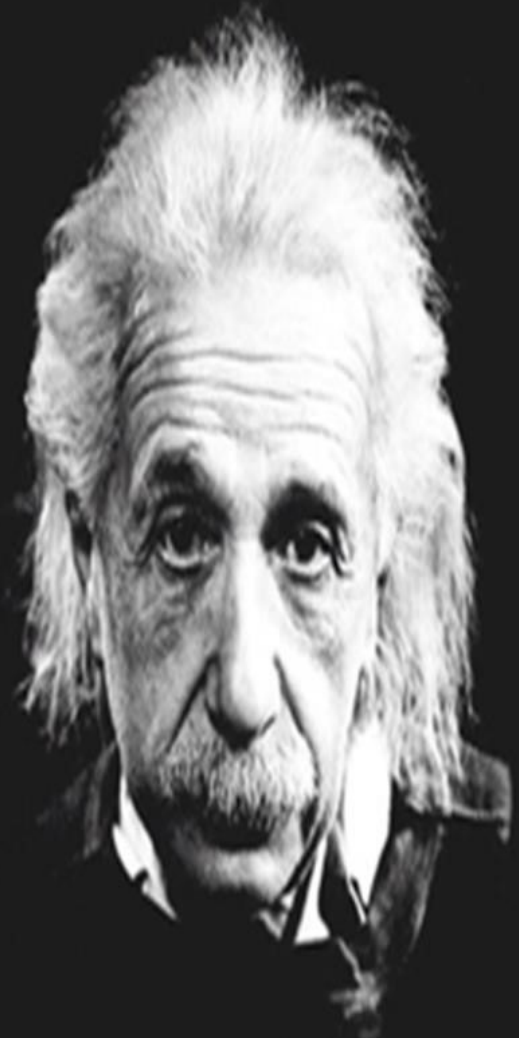
- well
- then
- then

1-1.5

	ASWS	DVCS	NPYWC DFVS
Common overall goal of service	<p>Women and children are safer</p> <p>Women are stronger</p>		
Expected short-term outcomes from contact at times of crisis	<p>A woman at the shelter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>feels safer and calmer inside the shelter</li> <li>uses the facilities</li> <li>asks for stuff</li> </ul> <p>Women feel/are stronger after a stay at the shelter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has a plan</li> <li>walks out upright</li> </ul>	<p>Adults and children have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>immediate safety</li> <li>increased knowledge of DFV</li> <li>increased awareness of options</li> <li>decreased isolation</li> </ul>	<p>Women to be and to feel as soon as possible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>believed</li> <li>less isolated, more connected</li> <li>more supported</li> <li>more capable</li> <li>more in control</li> </ul>
Area of research focus	<p>Whether staying at the shelter makes women feel/be stronger?</p> <p>How do women define feel/be stronger?</p> <p>Can tools be developed to measure if women feel/be stronger?</p>	<p>Whether expected short-term outcomes corresponded to what women value at time of crisis?</p> <p>Can these outcomes be measured?</p> <p>Do Aboriginal women trust the service?</p>	<p>What is the proper help for Aboriginal women experiencing family and domestic violence?</p> <p>How can the service measure this?</p> <p>How can the service know and measure that in response to a crisis it has helped women so that they are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>believed</li> <li>more connected and less isolated</li> <li>feel safer</li> </ul>
Methods	<p>Conversations with women in four stages</p> <p>File reviews</p>	<p>Focus groups</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>File review</p>	<p>Workshop</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>File review</p>

**"Not everything that  
counts can be counted,  
and not everything that  
can be counted counts."**

-Albert Einstein



# Research questions/approach

What 'works'?

What is 'effective'?



What matters?

What is valued?

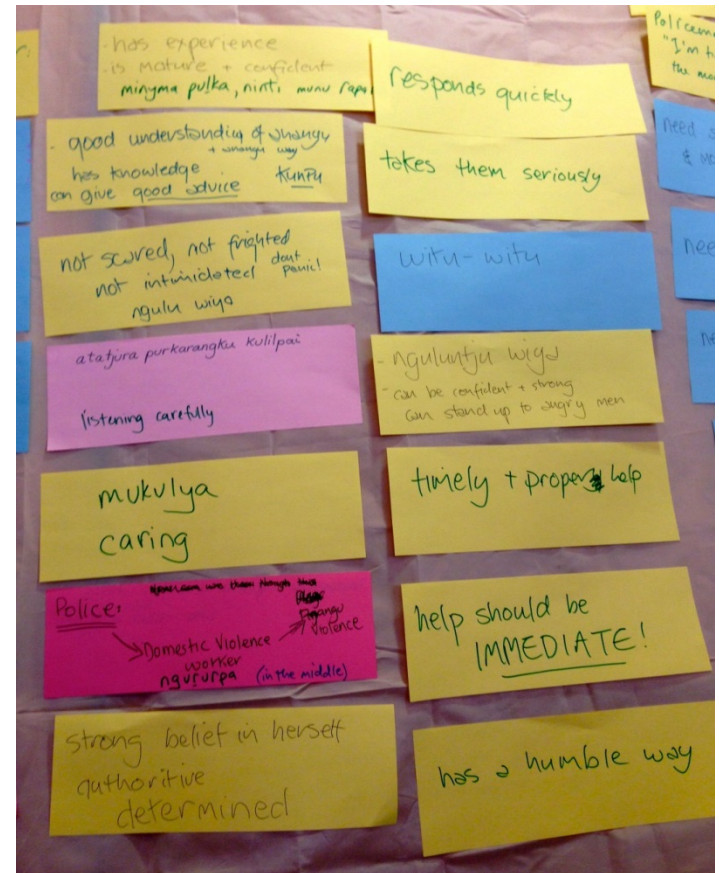


# What we learned:

1. Identify & count what matters to women.
2. Hand over the stick.
3. Get the words clear.



# Uti Kulintjaku: good workers and proper help

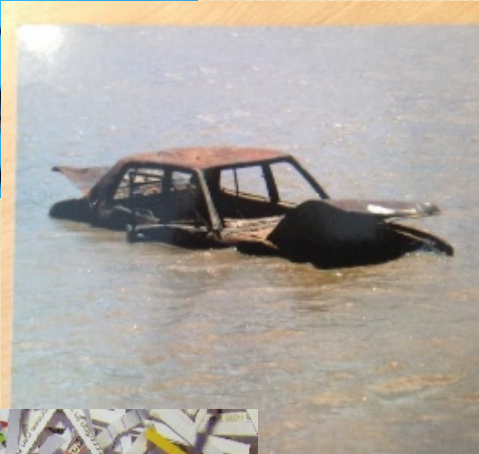




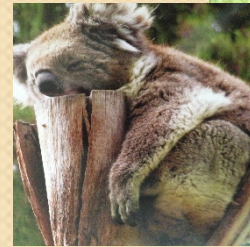
Jane's tattoo (reproduced with her permission)

## Exploring “free as a bird”

## Feeling before contact



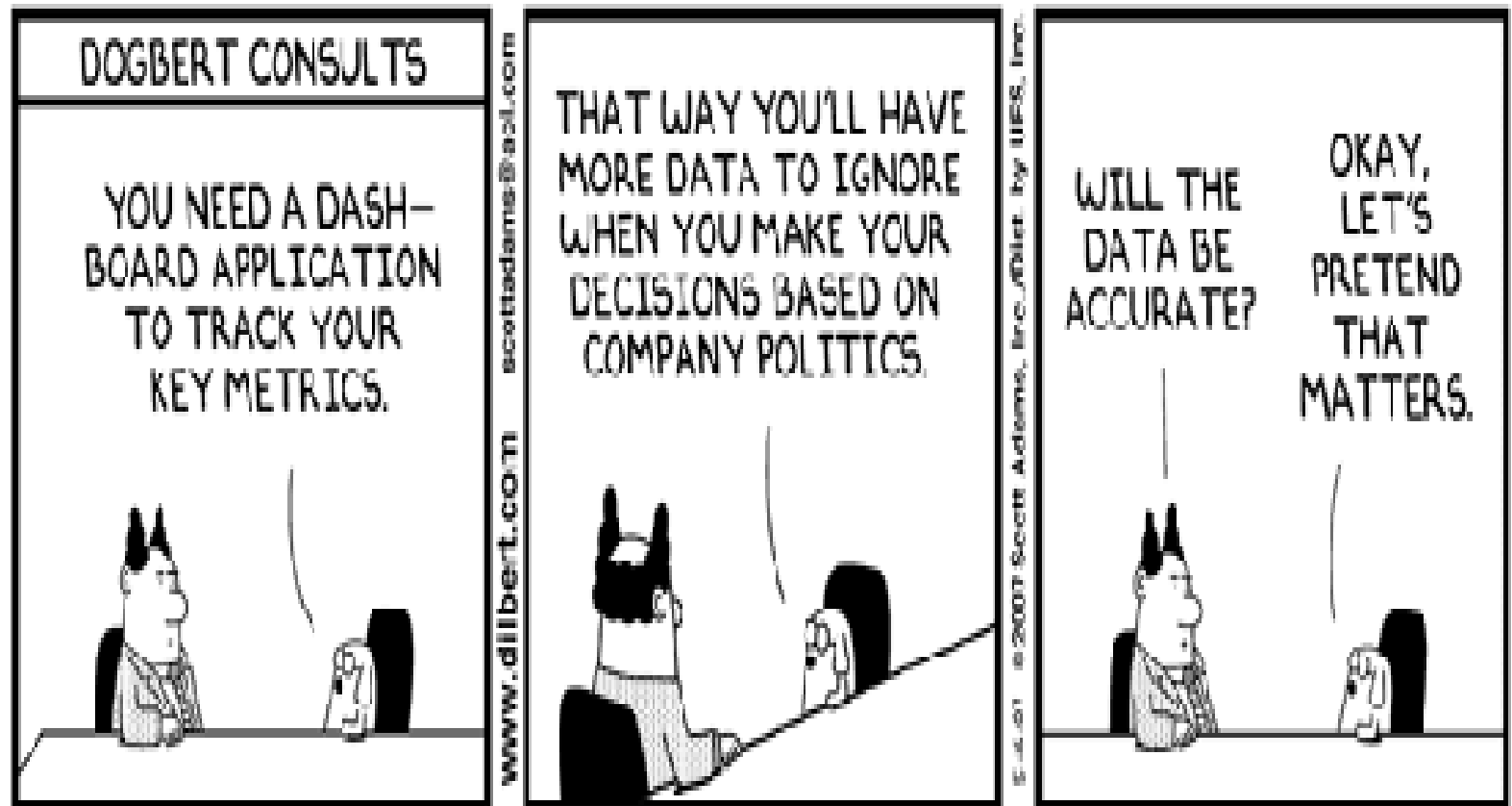
## Feeling after contact





# What we learned:

1. Identify & count what matters to women.
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4. Checking we understood the meaning in context.



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# What we learned:

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2. Hand over the stick.
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4. Checking we understood the meaning in context.
5. Invest time, self/selves, resources (make it count).

## ASWS trial continuum for feelings – represented as scales on paper

Frightened



Safe

Tired/stressed out



Rested

Alone/no family support



Supported

He's (his family) is the boss



Free/strong in myself

Not happy with/in myself



Happy with/in myself

# What we learned:

1. Identify & count what matters to women.
2. Hand over the stick.
3. Get the words clear.
4. Checking we understood the meaning in context.
5. Invest time, self/selves, resources (make it count).
6. Aboriginal women are more than 'a victim' or 'a client'. They too would like to make a difference.

# Some challenges

- Research ethics (what universities demand, subject/object constraints)
- Respondents as co-researchers – real equality?
- When is data *data*? (production as a process; co-researchers' access to data (re confidentiality))
- Be honest about power differences in co-research/co-design



*“Go slowly, softly. Use your ears, eyes, heart and brain.”*

Mrs.T. Colin OAM (dec.), former NPYWC staff member●



*For the research publications:*

<https://anrows.org.au/advocacy-for-safety-and-empowerment-good-practice-and-innovative-approaches-aboriginal-women>

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