

Final evaluation report of Safe Places



**Final evaluation report of Safe
Places 2008/09, prepared by the
Charles Darwin University Social
Partnerships in Learning (SPiL)
consortium**

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1 Executive summary

1.1 Introduction

This report documents the findings of the evaluation of the Safe Places project. The stated objectives of this project are described in the Memorandum of Understanding for the Family Support Package. The evaluation was conducted by the Charles Darwin University (CDU) Social Partnerships in Learning (SPiL) consortium through the Partnership Agreement contract managed by the Northern Territory Department of Health and Families (DHF). The evaluation was conducted between April and August 2009.

As part of the Australian Government Intervention (Northern Territory Emergency Response, or NTER), communities had been consulted by the Commonwealth on what initiatives they would like to see in their community. The Commonwealth also undertook some needs analysis work. The communities selected for the Safe Places were largely derived from these consultations.

While the Family Support Package included a number of sub programs, this report is focussed on an evaluation of Phase II of the Safe Places program. The Safe Places initiative to date can be envisaged in three phases: first, the building of physical infrastructure on the selected communities; secondly, the establishment of operational requirements for the opening of the centres (such as recruiting and training community workers); and the third stage is the maintenance and refinement as required of the program, preparing for a potential hand over of operations to non-government organisations (NGOs) and/or Shires. This report focuses on the second stage of the project, that is, the establishment and bedding down of operational requirements for the Safe Places to August 2009.

The purpose of this evaluation of Safe Places is primarily to inform the Northern Territory and Australian Government on the ongoing development and future potential of these facilities. Given that the facilities have so recently been opened, the primary focus of the evaluation is on processes and outputs rather than outcomes. The evaluation also provides an opportunity to consider how communities and local stakeholders expect Safe Places to work (i.e., what they *expect* the outcomes to be) and compare these with the expectations of both funders and project officers.

To enable this, qualitative feedback was sought from stakeholders such as workers and members of the Elders Cultural Reference Group, and other local stakeholders linked to Safe Places through referrals or through delivery of programs at the Safe Places, including a number of police, Shire and/or health clinic stakeholders. Transcripts of interviews with these stakeholders will remain confidential, but all have been analysed and provided invaluable information.

1.2 Response to the evaluation questions

The evaluation Scope of Work posed a number of questions that this report seeks to answer.

1.2.1 What are the emerging and expected outcomes of Safe Places as they are being rolled out into communities across the Northern Territory?

Emerging outcomes noted by the evaluation team have included:

- Increased employment and skill development opportunities for Indigenous people in communities where Safe Places are established;
- Raised profile of the need to address issues related to violence in communities;

- An additional, potentially useful asset that communities with Safe Places can draw on and use in a variety of ways, which was not there before;
- Opportunity for additional support for existing community-led initiatives such as Night Patrol);
- Opportunity for improved synergy between services already offered to communities (e.g. with , police, community corrections, health and child protection services, legal services);
- The emergence of a model that men can connect with and take some ownership of for the combined needs of both the community and the goals of government departments; and
- Reduced risk for individuals identified in the community as ‘strong women’ who could be asked to help—they now have a centre from which to work.

These early outcomes are yet to be tried and proven over the long term but we see that Safe Places offer an important space within their communities to achieve significantly more than is currently available. To some extent these emerging outcomes are also a reflection of the expected outcomes. That is, it would be expected that the *opportunities* and *potential* will be translated into tangible expressions of impact as the Safe Places develop in each community.

1.2.2 How is the implementation of Safe Places working towards addressing issues of: a) family function; b) health and well-being of families and communities, including victim safety; c) attitudes and perceptions about community and child safety, and family violence?

There are early indications that Safe Places staff are beginning to provide a broad role within their communities to address a range of issues that are directly or indirectly related to family function, well-being, community safety and attitudes about violence. However, it is noted that at the time interviews were conducted, Safe Places had only been in operation for about five months. The kind of impacts anticipated by the evaluation question above can be expected to take considerable time. Sustained outcomes and measurable changes are likely to occur with considerable additional investment in training and skill development, supervision, community ownership, along with support for network formation within and outside the community.

While the apparent (recorded) intakes are relatively few across the Northern Territory, it is important to consider that what staff have been asked to record are incidents of dysfunction at a community and family level. The activities that promote family and community *function* (including safety, health and well-being) are not the focus of monitoring forms. There is a strong case to suggest that this needs to change. Further, from a community development perspective, it will be important to embed the aspirations of the community into the model so that local expressions of family function, health and well-being and values associated with child safety and family violence can be embraced. The evaluation team noted that in some cases there was a disjuncture between the aspirations of communities and the expectations of the Department.

1.2.3 What are the emerging issues that need to be addressed with the regard to local Indigenous workforce development in those communities?

A number of issues arise from the findings of the evaluation that should be addressed in relation to workforce development. These include:

- The need for closer supervision and professional support of workers in communities;

- The need for additional training, mentoring and professional development;
- Greater clarity around role definition; and
- Additional infrastructure requirements (computers with Internet access) and access to transport.

At the time of writing this report, supervision was stretched so that realistically, support was only available on a once a month basis for some communities. This is clearly inadequate and there is as a result, a serious risk that the existing workforce will quickly turnover and find other opportunities for work. There is also a strong possibility that if a serious incident occurs at a Safe Place, such as an injury to a worker, criticism would be directed to the amount of support and oversight provided to workers in these high risk positions.

Alternatively, there is a risk for the Department, that people without appropriate qualifications and adequate English language, literacy and numeracy are given responsibility for outcomes that are unachievable. At a very basic level, a skills audit and training needs analysis should be undertaken for all existing and new staff entering employment. This audit should address:

- English language literacy and numeracy skills;
- Verbal and written communication skills;
- Occupational health and safety skills;
- Financial management skills;
- Information and communication technology skills;
- Knowledge of legal obligations relating to Safe Places (such as mandatory reporting, child protection); and
- Awareness of services and resources available within and outside their community.

From this audit a detailed training plan should be drawn up that progressively addresses the work skills of the employees.

On the other hand, it is also important for senior staff to recognise and utilise the local knowledge skills that individuals bring to their role, particularly in cases where the workers have been providing shelter for local family violence victims over a period of years. Learning models that encourage two-way learning should be encouraged and supported.

1.2.4 To what extent are service and service linkage, data and evidence gaps being filled (or not) by Safe Places?

In some ways it is really too early to say to what extent service linkage, data and evidence gaps are being filled by Safe Places. The short and blunt answer is that currently they are *not* filling these gaps. However, there are signs that linkages are being made. For example, the evaluation team observed examples of how service providers were being brought together for networking meetings at Safe Places (most notably at Nguu). These tentative linkages may ultimately serve to bridge service delivery gaps and promote more effective and better coordinated services within communities.

However, we believe it is unrealistic to expect Safe Place workers to make the connections and be held accountable for improving service coordination. This should be done with the support of supervisors who would work closely with Safe Place workers in communities to make the necessary connections. The evaluation team noted that external agencies (such as Police, GBMs, and Night Patrols) were generally supportive of Safe Places. However, these agencies were also concerned about the apparent lack of policies and procedures or agreed ways of working together. In some cases it may mean that Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) need

to be established. In other cases, a less formal working agreement may need to be established so that roles and responsibilities are clearly delineated. For example, when the evaluation team visited Lajamanu, the police indicated their strong support for the Safe Place but also expressed a degree of frustration about not knowing who to contact, not having mobile phone numbers and not being aware of who was rostered on when.

At this point in time there is little evidence to suggest that data and evidence gaps are being filled by Safe Places. The documentation and reporting provided to the evaluation team are scant in detail and we do not believe that the data provided reflect accurately either the activities or the outcomes of the Safe Places. Steps to overcome this are suggested below. That said, the Safe Places *do* provide an important opportunity to address the evidence gaps and we acknowledge the strong potential for good evidence and data to be collected through the Safe Places initiative.

1.2.5 How effective are, and what changes should be made to, data collection tools and processes?

The small number of data collection tools and documentation returned to the evaluation team for analysis is of some concern. If, as the 19 recorded intakes may suggest, the level of activity in Safe Places is so low, questions would naturally be raised about the value of such facilities in remote communities. Alternatively, the small number of completed forms may reflect a number of other things:

- Lack of supervision to ensure that forms are filled in;
- A level of complexity beyond the abilities of workers;
- A lack of training in how to fill in the forms;
- The activity takes place outside the Safe Places and is therefore not recorded as Safe Place activity;
- Inadequate collation processes in place to collect and manage the information;
- The presence of a Safe Place within the community (and perhaps other developments such as new police stations or alcohol restrictions) is helping to reduce actual levels of violence (and this is then why it is not being used);
- A disjuncture between the envisaged function of the Safe Places and the current reality (forms do not capture what is happening).

Most likely, the reality is that the reason for so few forms being collected is a combination of the above. The evidence collected by the evaluation team suggests a lot more activity than 19 intakes. The assumption embedded in the recording forms is that clients will be taken in and provided accommodation or some other service. This assumption is reflected in the minimum data set which was to include:

1. Client information;
2. Intake information;
3. A safety plan;
4. Case management forms;
5. Information and release forms; and
6. Information about safe house stays.

There is no evidence of safety plans or case management taking place (at least according to the data captured). However, the forms as they are at the moment, constrain workers into recording a limited range of activities that are designed around mitigating the impact of violence or some other antisocial behaviour. If, as may be the case, the workers are performing a broader role in promoting safety, community harmony, health and well-being and raising awareness about positive lifestyle changes, then opportunity for those things to be captured, must be given.

1.3 Recommendations and conclusions

A range of recommendations are outlined below. A brief description of the situation follows each recommendation.

1.3.1 Resourcing and timeline

Recommendation 1: It is recommended that resources are immediately provided to recruit project officer/coordination staff (particularly men and where possible Indigenous people) to establish a structure for visiting and supporting Safe Place community workers along the lines of that which has been developed for RAFCWs.

While the three year *Implementation Plan for the Family Package* provides overarching surety for the program in the near future a number of points need to be made to provide stability to the Safe Place operations in the near term. Included in this is the ongoing need for the strong support of community workers by the visiting project officers. The continued development of trust between community worker and project officers to ensure the program can be owned by Indigenous people will require a way of working consistent with well developed community development principles and Recommendation 9, below).

Recommendation 2: In line with Recommendations 7, 8 and 9 below, it is recommended that resources be provided to ensure the planned audit, training, mentoring and support functions are carried out as soon as possible.

Recommendation 3: In line with Recommendations 4, 5 and 6 below, it is recommended that resources be provided to ensure the review of hub function activities with commensurate training and funding allocations.

1.3.2 Hub development

Recommendation 4: It is recommended that the concept of the Safe Places being a 'hub' of activities be accepted.

In line with this it is suggested that the skills and activities required to carry out this adult education/broker role be enunciated so that adequate training and resources can be applied to this role. It is apparent that the concept of Safe Places as 'Hubs' of activities, including learning, cultural and networking activities, is essential to the eventual evolution of Safe Places to centres that can not only assuage current family violence issues, but attack underlying issues. Such activities also encourage strong community ownership and direction and allow communities their own particular 'style' of development.

Recommendation 5: It is recommended that the role of developing relationships to support both hub and primary activities include the development of onsite MoUs with primary agencies such as Police, Night Patrols/Shires and Health Centres.

Without strong connections to the three agencies named in this recommendation the job of the Safe Places becomes very difficult. While it is recognised that the relationships will have to be achieved at the community level, this may need to be supported from the Northern Territory Government/Australian Government level.

Recommendation 6: It is recommended that resources are engaged for the purposes of supporting Men's Places to:

- a. Provide adequate project officer staff as noted in Recommendation 1 to support Men's Places;
- b. Develop a structured plan for Men's Places that incorporates hub and education activities so that they may also be seen as places where men can go for a variety of reasons concerning their and the community's well-being; and
- c. Establish a pool of funding to be made available to each Men's Place to carry out such well-being or hub activities.

At present Men's Places are not receiving the attention that Women's Places are—this is particularly evident in the lack of project officers to support, train and monitor Men's Places. A perception that Men's Places are not receiving similar or adequate attention may grow and impair the ability of Men's Places to engage with their communities.

1.3.3 Training and support

Recommendation 7: It is recommended that an audit is undertaken of community workers skills and that such audit not only reviews western qualifications and skills, but also the Indigenous cultural knowledge and skills that the workers potentially bring to the role.

It is important that the community worker role is established around both Indigenous and non-Indigenous sets of skills and understandings. The process of gathering and supporting an integrated (Indigenous/western) set of skills and values will also act to indicate to Indigenous community members that the program indeed intends to become embedded in the community.

Recommendation 8: It is recommended that the steps currently under consideration by NTFC (Training and support, page 39), including the reintroduction of a mentoring scheme, certificate training and communication plan (between community workers and project officers), be applied as soon as possible.

At this point adequate training and support, including supporting community worker initiatives, are at a crucial point. Some of the initial enthusiasm and the direction of a negotiated purpose have been lost. It cannot be stated strongly enough that the 'front end'

loading (in this instance for training and support) is vital in the development of in community provision. Workers need to be better supported in documenting what they are doing—much of it likely to be 'invisible'—and also in having ways that they can track progress and the impact of their work with clients/families. It is important to regain perceived 'lost ground' here. In terms of a communication plan, note should be made of the RAFCW response to this issue.

Recommendation 9: It is recommended that project officers also be audited in terms of their skill sets and that these are viewed across the necessary skills required of project officers to adequately carry out their role.

It is not necessary that every project officer has all sets of skills required, including training, negotiating and community development skills. However it is important that each team has strengths that cover the purposes of the visiting teams.

1.3.4 Employment

Recommendation 10: It is recommended that the issue of employing community workers as casual part time workers be held under review.

Some of the issues of recruitment and employment may move to an NGO, Shire, or NGO/Shire agency over the next 12 months. This may both provide additional flexibility and the opportunity to review the nature of employment in the program.

1.3.5 Mediating risk

Recommendation 11: It is recommended that the current legislation concerning mandatory reporting is included in current training.

Recommendation 12: It is recommended that a set of principles of safe practice be established and that project officers and community workers are trained and audited in these measures.

Recommendation 13: It is recommended that community workers have access to a mobile communication device for their safety (telephone or two way radio).

Recommendation 14 It is recommended that community workers have access to a vehicle so that they might carry out all aspects of their role.

There are a number of risks to workers at various levels of the organisation of Safe Places. It is import that, as far as possible, NTFC ameliorates such risk. Recommendations 11 to 14 reflect areas of concern as they affect NTFC Safe Place community workers.

Recommendation 15: It is recommended that a plan for project officer visits be developed and that it is reviewed to ensure that health and safety issues have been taken into account.

There are also concerns for the safety of visiting project officers in terms of vehicle travel over long distances. This can be exacerbated when their visiting schedules are hectic and they become tired. There is also a health risk in terms of stress disorders from the combination of travel, time away from home, and work pressures.

1.3.6 Documentation and monitoring

Recommendation 16 It is recommended that data capture forms be updated to take into account the emerging and broader role of workers in supporting family and community well-being.

Forms need to be simplified further and existing expectations of case management and other more detailed information about Safe Place stays, should be regarded as unrealistic for the time being, although it is important that critical information continue to be captured until new forms have been finalised.

Recommendation 17 It is recommended that a formative evaluation framework be built around the Safe Places model to ensure that learnings from the work being carried out are acted on and so that improvements can be made to the model.

While, for the purposes of interim reporting purposes, the current evaluation has had its use in documenting progress and outcomes to date, it does little over the long term to shape the operational development of the program. An evaluation framework should be developed cooperatively with a range of stakeholders, including those with a direct interest in the communities where Safe Places are.

Recommendation 18 Following on from Recommendation 17, it is recommended that an evaluation framework be built around a program logic model that clearly articulates the activities and anticipated outcomes of Safe Places over at least the short and medium term.

A program logic workshop (or something similar) should target not only senior staff, but in some way capture the ideas and aspirations of community members (including workers).

While program logic is not without its pitfalls, used in conjunction with a continuous improvement process and a formative evaluation (as suggested in Recommendation 17), it would provide a valuable point of reference for the ongoing development of—and subsequent assessment of—the Safe Places initiative. Further, the logic model will provide clarity around the intent of the program in terms of its activities and expected outcomes. This does not mean that changes, where necessary, cannot be made to the program (or the logic model assumptions) but it does mean that the starting point for evaluation and development purposes, is clearly articulated.

Recommendation 19 It is recommended that within the Safe Places team an individual be identified who collates, analyses, reports and responds to data collected from Safe Places workers in communities.

Statistics should be reported on a monthly basis back to the Safe Places management. Issues or alerts raised on forms should be identified and responded to as soon as practical.

1.3.7 The future

Recommendation 20: It is recommended that possible models of Northern Territory Government relationship to NGO/Shire operations be developed so as the role of the Northern Territory Government can be clarified which in turn will allow more effective planning around issues such as staffing and professional development training.

While the move to transfer operational day-to-day control of Safe Places to other agencies may be an exciting one, it is also one fraught with challenges. Included in these challenges are the uncertainties such a change will create and the need to find a way for the Northern Territory Government to maintain trusting relationships with the Safe Places while allowing the new entities to build their trust and support.

Recommendation 21: It is recommended that there is a review of Indigenous governance of the project in line with operations moving to a new operations approach.

Due to a variety of factors it would seem that the initial negotiated position for Safe Places as places where control would return to the community has been eroded. There is now the perception of a top down model in place. This situation requires reviewing and rectifying to ensure Indigenous community uptake and ownership of the Safe Places.

Recommendation 22: It is recommended that better communications and monitoring technology and processes such as computers and access to other sites through internet connection be investigated and costed with a view to implementing over the next 12 months.

As Safe Places continue to develop it is important that they get the appropriate tools and training to carry out their roles efficiently and effectively.

1.4 Conclusions

Some general statements can be made around the Safe Places program. Emerging from the NTER into a world of other changes and issues in remote area Indigenous communities was always going to make this a challenging program to see to fruition. Pressure, particularly initially, to meet timelines within uncertain budget outcomes also added to the stress on the program. In addition, the issue of VOCs also created a major disruption to the progress being made in communities and created lost momentum as potential workers who had shown strong interest could not be employed (budget uncertainty) and so lost interest. Such disruptions also impacted on the processes and morale of visiting staff.

Further, in hindsight it was noted that there was some misplaced optimism in terms of the speed at which community consultation could take place. As one participant said, *you've really got to be moderated in the tempo around the community consultation process*. In other words, and this intention was strongly held across those interviewed, if this program is to be embedded in the community and have 'real' community ownership, the process needs to be flexible and flow at the individual communities pace. There is little evidence to suggest at this point (although it is early days for most community Safe Places) that communities are 'owning' their Safe Places.

If we place the events around the on ground visiting, training and support then the current set of challenges stand out clearly. However, it is apparent that management is aware of many of the issues and is moving to address them. There does, however, remain a question concerning where the tipping point is for each Safe Place in terms of losing credibility and enthusiasm and managing risk. This calls for an urgent response to issues of providing resources to the areas of auditing, training and supporting Safe Places. They cannot be delayed.

We would also note that there are quite a number of positives that have emerged in the development of Safe Places to date. These include, for example, a strong will in communities to tackle the problem of Indigenous family violence, many committed community workers, and now funding security over the next three years for the program. Hopefully planning and development can now move to rectify some of the issues that have evolved.

2 Introduction

This report documents the findings of the evaluation of the Safe Places project. The stated objectives of this project are described in the Memorandum of Understanding for the Family Support Package (Schedule 3.6.1) as follows:

1. Consistent with recommendations from the *Little Children are Sacred* Report this component will increase options for families with family violence issues by opening and operating twenty new facilities in fifteen remote Northern Territory communities and two new transitional houses - one in Darwin and one in Alice Springs. The Safe Houses will be linked to a range of programs and services for families and children, victims and perpetrators.
2. Increase protection and safety for women and children in remote Indigenous communities.
3. Build on joint family violence projects under this funding agreement and undertakings under Council of Australian Government.

The evaluation was conducted by the Charles Darwin University (CDU) Social Partnerships in Learning (SPiL) consortium through the Partnership Agreement contract managed by the Northern Territory Department of Health and Families (DHF). The evaluation was conducted between April and August 2009.

2.1 Development of the model

This section sets out the context in which the Safe Places developed, looking at the models and issues which influenced the direction of the Safe Places initiative as well as its immediate history. The Safe Places initiative began as a response to recommendations within the *Little Children are Sacred* report (Wild and Anderson 2007). The model was originally described as an 'Expansion of Safe Houses' (Annexure 11-Family Support Package) and then developed into 'Safe Places' in the MoU between the Australian Government and the Northern Territory Government.

The project was described in terms of the following:

1) This Project Plan covers the operational phase of the 20 remote and two urban safe houses constructed and retrofitted in the 2007/08 Family Support Package (\$12.3 million) identified under the Australian Government's Northern Territory Emergency Response...

2) The Safe House service model provides for a holistic and culturally appropriate response to family violence. To this end the safe houses will provide a mix of prevention and community awareness programs, family interventions via family action plans and crisis accommodation.

2.2 Implementation of the model

As part of the Australian Government Intervention (Northern Territory Emergency Response, or NTER), communities had been consulted by the Commonwealth on what initiatives they would like to see in their community. The Commonwealth also undertook some needs analysis work. The communities selected for the Safe Places were largely derived from these

consultations. A detailed description of the development of the model is given in the *Case Study: Family Support Package* prepared by SPiL in 2008 (Arnott et al. 2008).

2.3 The current evaluation context

While the Family Support Package included a number of sub programs this report is focussed on an evaluation of Phase II of the Safe Places program. The Safe Places initiative to date can be envisaged in three phases: first, the building of physical infrastructure on the selected communities; secondly, the establishment of operational requirements for the opening of the centres (such as recruiting and training community workers); and the third stage is the maintenance and refinement as required of the program, preparing for a potential hand over of operations to non-government organisations (NGOs) and/or Shires.

As noted above, Phase I, the construction phase, was originally scheduled to end 30 June 2008. However, a range of unforeseen factors, such as the discovery of formaldehyde and Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) in Royal Wolf containers and the complexity of consulting with communities and related parties over placement and ownership of land during a period when both land tenure and community governance arrangements were in flux, delayed both the construction and the staffing of the Safe Places. This impacted on Phase II development as will be described in this report.

The purpose of the evaluation of the new Safe Places is primarily to inform the Northern Territory and Australian Government on the ongoing development and future potential of these facilities. Given that the facilities have so recently been opened, the primary focus of the evaluation is on processes and outputs rather than outcomes. The evaluations also provides an opportunity to consider how communities and local stakeholders expect Safe Places to work (i.e., what they *expect* the outcomes to be) and compare these with the expectations of both funders and project officers.

To enable this, qualitative feedback was sought from stakeholders such as workers and members of the Elders Cultural Reference Group, and other local stakeholders linked to Safe Places through referrals or through delivery of programs at the Safe Place, including a number of police, Shire and/or health clinic stakeholders. Transcripts of interviews with these stakeholders will remain confidential, but all have been analysed and provided invaluable information.

Where NTFC was able to provide quantitative data to the evaluation team, it was also analysed, including output measures such as number of clients at each centre. Due to the timing of this evaluation stage relative to the initiation of operations at the Safe Places, little outcome data was anticipated to be available, but the evaluation team did investigate:

- Whether baseline measures and client information were being consistently recorded, which would be a necessary prerequisite to ever producing such information; and
- Whether agreements have been negotiated to date by NTFC with stakeholders such as education and local health clinics to document and share the required information for these outcomes measures.

2.4 Limitations

As with all evaluations a number of limitations constrain the ability of evaluators to achieve everything that was desirable or expected of the scope of work. In stating these limitations we are not trying to make excuses or find blame. Rather we are simply acknowledging the issues that impeded our capacity. These issues are summarised in this section:

2.4.1 Time frame

The timeframe of the evaluation was extremely short. With all things being equal, the tasks were doable. However, interruptions and delays meant that some tasks were unable to be fully completed in the allotted time. We were also not able within this timeframe to have access to the *Implementation Plan for the Family Package*.

2.4.2 Community visits

The intention at the outset was to visit each community twice: first to identify key stakeholders and build relationships with Safe Places staff, and second to gather data and offer some feedback. The team made two visits to Nguu and Ntaria, one visit to Lajamanu and Peppimenarti and no visits to Apatula. In relation to Apatula, three visits were scheduled but abandoned because of staff availability issues and community funerals.

2.4.3 Data availability

The evaluation team was provided with 28 monitoring forms completed by Safe Places staff. It is difficult to draw conclusions from such a small sample of data. We acknowledge that there are several reasons for this.

2.4.4 Community perspective

We are conscious that the community perspective is difficult to accurately portray. While we are confident of the data we have collected, we acknowledge that our perspective is an external observer's of that data and for this reason some care should be taken when reading the 'community perspective'.

3 Literature review

Themes in the international literature relevant to the Safe Places include materials on violence dynamics and responses to violence, including prevention work as well as crisis response services and follow-up work with victims, perpetrators and families particularly in remote Indigenous contexts. Indigenous and gender issues are of special interest, as well as remote workforce development and Indigenous ownership.

3.1 Family violence definition, incidence and impact

The term 'family violence' is increasingly used in preference to 'domestic violence', particularly by Indigenous stakeholders. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC 2003) notes that Indigenous concepts of violence are broader than usual mainstream definitions of domestic violence, citing Atkinson et al. (2003):

The term Family Violence is more suitable as it brings focus to the trauma of the interconnecting and trans-generational experiences of individuals within families, to show the continuity between how Indigenous peoples have been acted upon and how in turn they may then act upon others and themselves. (p. 10)

The *Domestic and Family Violence Act 2007* of the Northern Territory defines domestic violence as being conduct committed by one person against another, under the terms: harm, damaging property (including injury or death of an animal), intimidation (including harassment and the consideration of a pattern of conduct in the person's behaviour), stalking, economic abuse (including withholding money reasonably necessary for the maintenance of the person or a child of the person), and attempting or threatening any of these (Section 5). Defining 'domestic relationship' between the two people largely revolves around family and relatives, but also takes account of custodial/guardianship relationships, intimate (including dating, with or without sexual conduct), carers and co-habitation (Section 9). A family relationship embraces relatives of the person according to Aboriginal tradition or contemporary social practice (Section 10).

It is extremely difficult to measure the true incidence of family violence, as virtually all studies note that only a minority of incidents are ever reported and recorded (Carrington and Phillips 2006). Most incidents remain 'hidden' or are shared only with family members or friends (Phillips 2004; Statistics Canada 2005b).

Compared to other Australian jurisdictions, reported family violence rates are much higher in the Northern Territory and are still rising. Even compared to other Indigenous populations, Northern Territory rates are high, with a rate of family violence assault rate of 2,880 per 100,000. The rate of family violence assault in the Northern Territory's Indigenous population is 16.3 times higher than in the non-Indigenous population, the largest discrepancy of any Australian jurisdiction (Bryant and Willis 2008).

Even setting aside the enormous physical and emotional impact of family violence, Johnstone and O'Rourke (2006) note that according to a 2004 study of the costs of domestic violence in Australia, the annual cost in the Northern Territory would be over \$80 million in 2004 dollars if the rates of domestic violence in the Northern Territory were equivalent to those in other jurisdictions. In fact, as the Northern Territory has Australia's highest rates of domestic/family violence, considerably outstripping all other States, the actual costs must be much higher.

3.2 Responding to violence

There are many ways to respond to violence in addition to crisis response services accessed when a family violence victim flees the home due to actual or (particularly in remote communities) prospective violence, or requires aid to stay in their home due to fears of ongoing violence. The use of shelters is still the norm for those who access the formal service system, although there is increasing acknowledgment that victims should be able to remain at home and perpetrators should have to leave, as there are considerable challenges to managing victim safety in these cases (McFerran 2007).

There have been calls to take a more holistic approach to addressing violence, with a high proportion of resources supporting programs that are not crisis-focused. Stopping problems before they occur (primary prevention) is widely acknowledged to be a better solution, and there is evidence that it is also more cost-effective (Wien et al. 2007:12). Prevention programs tailored to Indigenous and remote community contexts are becoming more common (see for example Public Legal Education and Information Service of New Brunswick 2009), with some focusing on the role of particular groups in prevention, including men (CatholicCare NT 2009) or young people (Native Women's Association of Canada Youth Council 2009).

The next best outcome for problems is to address them at the earliest possible stage, before too much damage has been done. This could mean, for example, that a woman's refuge could encourage women to access services and ask for a family intervention as soon as there is even a potential threat of inappropriate control or violence, rather than positioning them as shelters for women with serious injuries or fleeing in fear for their lives.

The term 'early intervention' is also used for interventions that target children and young people, who may have been impacted by violence through witnessing it, being victims or engaging in violence and/or inappropriately controlling behaviour themselves. Several studies have found that 85 to 90 per cent of the time when a violent incident took place in a domestic situation, children were present and children were also abused during the violent incident in about 50 per cent of those cases (James 1994; McGee 2000). Witnessing family violence is the strongest predictor of perpetration of violence in young people's own intimate relationships (Indermaur 2001). Interestingly, Indermaur notes that

Young people growing up in homes where there has been couple violence (both male and female carers perpetrating and being victimised by domestic violence) were more likely to be victims of relationship violence and perpetrators of violence in their intimate relationships. (p. 4)

This is the context in which many of the Safe Places operate, perhaps reflecting the breakdown of community norms and normalisation of violence. Early interventions are required to break this cycle of violence

Increased attention is also being paid to addressing the post-crisis elements of the family violence system. This requires a mix of family support programs and interventions, recovery programs to enable those who have been subjected to violence to heal and move on with their lives (whether or not this means a return to the relationship where violence occurred), and also programs which enable people who have used violence to be welcomed back into their families and communities as people who deal respectfully with others, and no longer use violence and abuse. The aim of all of these programs is to move away from a system that temporarily halts violence during imprisonment only to see it re-emerge upon release, or which supports victims temporarily, but where the victims repeatedly return to violent

situations, and to be more inclusive of Aboriginal perspectives (Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-operative Ltd 2005; National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence 2006).

Due to the short period of time women from remote communities typically remain in shelters, follow-up services would seem to be of particular importance. However, as already noted above, most victims—Indigenous and non-Indigenous, in urban and remote areas—access informal support from family and friends rather than accessing funded services (Laing 2003), meaning that much of the ‘recovery’ components of women’s post-crisis situations are invisible to researchers.

3.3 Working in a remote Indigenous community context

Many risk factors identified for being a victim of family violence, and particularly intimate partner violence, have special relevance to Safe Places, including:

- Being Indigenous and/or a member of a marginalised sub-group (Mouzos 2001; Statistics Canada 2005a);
- Living in a remote community (ABS/AIHW 2008);
- High alcohol use or being an alleged offender for other offences (e.g. Statistics Canada 2005a; Australian Institute of Criminology 2007 and for a particularly nuanced view, Chan 2005); and
- Being removed from natural family, or having relatives removed from their natural family (Bryant and Willis 2008).

The length of time a victim is in contact with funded services varies widely. For example, although urban refuges often house victims for weeks and may secure transitional housing for months, in remote communities the average victim’s stay in a shelter may be hours, or a couple of days, although visits may be repeated regularly (Guenther et al. 2008).

Virtually every study shows that Indigenous people are over-represented as both victims and perpetrators of family violence, and those in remote communities are at particular risk. Forty-one per cent of Indigenous people living in remote communities reported in 2002 that family violence and assault were problems in their community. Thirty per cent reported as a ‘life stressor’ having witnessed violence within the previous 12 months (a rate three times as high as Indigenous people living in non-remote communities), and 17 per cent had witnessed abuse (ABS 2004:4) In 2008, ‘almost half (45 per cent) of Indigenous people who had been a witness to violence also reported being a victim of physical or threatened violence’ (ABS 2004).

The Australian Productivity Commission, in its national report monitoring progress in overcoming Indigenous disadvantage (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision 2005) noted that based on regions with sufficient data such as Northern Territory, in 2004-05 Indigenous people were hospitalised for assault at 17 times the rate of non-Indigenous people. Indigenous females were 44 times as likely to be hospitalised for assault as non-Indigenous females (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision 2007).

The higher rates of violence in Indigenous communities have been linked to dispossession, marginalisation, unemployment and poverty and reflect similarly higher rates of violence (relative to the general population) in countries other than Australia, such as North America and New Zealand (Mouzos and Rushworth 2003). Mouzos (2001) notes that Indigenous and non-Indigenous homicides differ in a number of ways other than relative frequency:

- They are more likely to occur in a remote community;

- They are more likely to have a single victim and offender; and
- They are more likely to involve a female as either victim or perpetrator.

One of the barriers to reporting such violence is the possibility that the report could lead to serious conflict, not just within the family, but at community level (Taylor and Putt 2007) and a number of authors have noted the potential for years of payback if issues are resolved in the legal system but not in the Aboriginal system.

The perspective of many (but not all) Indigenous community members, and their attitudes to family violence, may also differ in some respects from mainstream perspectives (Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-operative Ltd 2005) with a preference for solutions at the community level which maintain family relationships, acknowledge the role of historical trauma and men's loss of traditional roles as a contributory cause of violence, without using this as an excuse for violence. A Canadian study found that 'first responders' such as non-Indigenous shelter workers and police could interpret such responses as a sign that 'women and their communities may be less able to view the issue with clarity or resolve, having yet to fully come to believe that male violence against women is inexcusable' (Public Health Agency of Canada 2008:13).

Nevertheless, Blagg (2000), cited in Tomison (2004:62), notes that 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have a clear preference for change strategies that do not require the perpetrators of violence to leave the family'.

Similar issues are noted overseas:

Women who require emergency shelter for themselves and their children often use specialized emergency shelters and Transition houses funded solely for this group..., the provision of supports and services through these venues does not meet the needs of Aboriginal women. Frequently, these shelters approach issues of family violence and homelessness through a 'justice' lens that does not accommodate a First Nations emphasis on healing. While there are some Aboriginal shelters and Transition houses, they are not adequate to meet the need. A further barrier is that [these] shelters ... have received lower rates of support than those funded through other sources, which further hampers their viability and ability to provide programs and services. (Native Women's Association of Canada 2007:2)

This does not mean that new models have not emerged.

In recent decades, Aboriginal women in Canada have taken leadership in reviving long-existing indigenous teachings and healing practices to empower women, their families and communities... reclaiming and celebrating their roles as healers and elders responsible for the well-being of their people and all living beings. They are creating comprehensive programs aimed at combating multi-generational cycles of violence, poverty and exclusion rooted in a five hundred year old history of colonialism and aggressive assimilation... These Aboriginal approaches differ from mainstream feminist anti-violence programs that focus on the individual client and her children but not the individual and her relationships with family members, community, the wider society and the planet as a whole. (Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women 2008, p. 1)

As the Interventions for Children project revealed (Darwin YWCA 2007), in a number of communities, although remote shelters struggled to provide programs and keep workers safe, they also demonstrated innovative patterns of usage. Many appeared to be used proactively (i.e. accessed temporarily in anticipation of violence triggered by drinking). In many other cases, women appeared to access the shelter as a temporary respite from violence; the stays in the shelters tended to be quite short, hours or a couple of days rather than weeks and months and it appeared that women would use the shelter repeatedly. There were certainly women seeking to build an independent life for themselves, and wanting longer stays and different types of services, but it seemed that this was a minority pattern. There did not appear to be a high number of cases where the shelters were sites of family intervention programs to challenge and change ongoing violence patterns, perhaps because many workers were untrained, unsupported and often victims of ongoing violence in their own family. Part of the difficulty may lie in fear of retribution from extended family members if reports of violence lead to imprisonment, a dynamic noted in both Canada (Public Health Agency of Canada 2008) and Australia.

Shelter workers in these communities are at special risk. Although an individual's commitment to their community and culture may act as an incentive for them to be engaged in employment associated with violence and child protection (Bromfield et al. 2007), conflicting loyalties arising from residing in small kin-based communities can be stressful for workers and difficult to mediate without external support. There can also be difficulties in a small kin-based community in never being off-duty (Walmsley 2004), and there may be particular difficulties when the worker lives in the same community as an offender who is a family member or a Community Elder, and/or formal action (such as imprisonment) is taken against the offender (Stanley 2003).

The growing awareness of the impact of violence on children, can be particularly problematic where there is a risk that children will be taken into care if they continue to be exposed to ongoing violence, as in a jurisdiction (like the Northern Territory) where there is mandatory reporting of family violence with children present to child protection. Concerns are noted in the literature about 'the tendency of statutory child protection departments to focus on the mother's failure to protect the children...' (Irwin et al. 2003:4). Similar concerns are reported where women are experiencing sexual violence: 'Some Indigenous women were afraid of having their children taken away by social welfare officers if they reported the violence' (Taylor and Putt 2007:5).

Traumatised women in these cases may be put in a situation where they must find a way to control the perpetrator's violence or lose their children. When police and restraining orders fail to stop the violence, women have been sometimes forced to lie and put themselves at greater risk in order to try to retain their children. New 'joined up services' are beginning to address this situation in a number of overseas jurisdictions (Sawyer and Lohrbach 2008), but there are still concerns about this situation in much of Australia, with few child protection workers aware of how to source appropriate support families where children are being exposed to violence (Irwin et al. 2003). New Indigenous-focused materials targeting this issue are beginning to be available (National Clearinghouse on Family Violence 2006).

Training Indigenous shelter workers also poses challenges. The rationale for building a remote Indigenous workforce is clear. It makes more sense to build capacity in people living in remote communities to deliver local services than it does to continue trying to re-locate skilled workers and professionals to remote regions. This is particularly so in view of the high costs involved, and also the staff turnover often found in these positions. The average turnover time for non-Indigenous senior managerial staff at Yuendumu, for example, was 2.1 years, and

turnover for non-senior staff appeared even faster than this (Musharbash 2001). However, education levels are typically lower in remote communities than in other regions of Australia, thus making the achievement of professional qualifications and work in health and community services difficult (Korhonen 2006). The need to provide gendered services and to manage avoidance relationships, and to support workers in dealing with their own—often traumatic—life experiences (Whiteside et al. 2006) also present substantial challenges.

Setting aside these (serious) issues, there is also the question of the extent to which workers should be trained to duplicate current mainstream professional practice. There are concerns that current professional frameworks do not adequately reflect Indigenous values (Baldry and Green 2002). There are calls for more ‘culturally competent’ (Weaver 1999), ‘culturally safe’ or ‘culturally secure’ (Burgess et al. 2008) service delivery, not to accommodate workers’ issues but to provide better outcomes for clients. Such changes would require alterations to current mainstream practices.

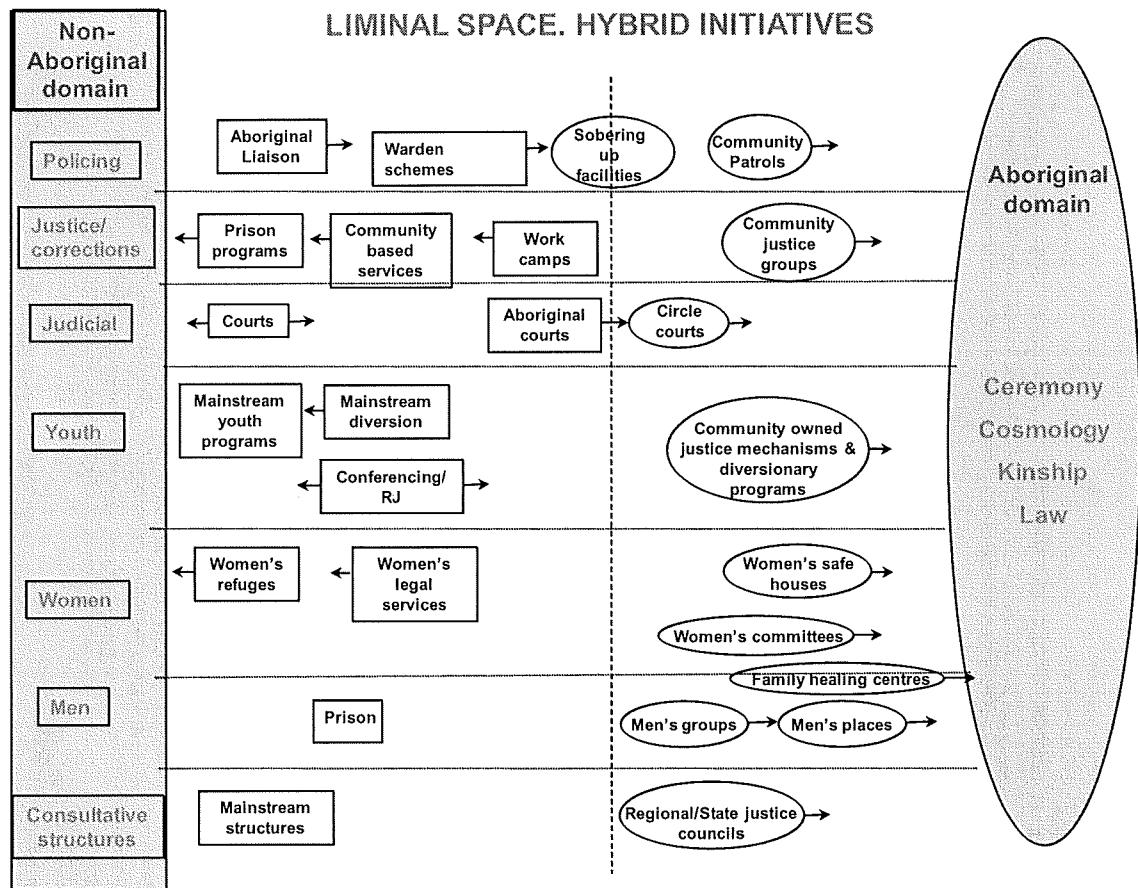
Guenther (2006:306) identifies six factors that contribute to effective training: 1) meeting stakeholder needs; 2) having sufficient motivators in place; 3) providing adequate enablers including relational structures and infrastructure; 4) delivery strategies that include quality program content, positive relationships and valued qualifications; 5) building identity of participants; and 6) outcomes that are consistent with intended purposes of training. The importance of identity development as a product of training is increasingly recognised in the vocational and adult learning literature (Falk and Balatti 2003; Preston 2004; Côté 2005) and is not limited to Indigenous or non-Indigenous contexts. Identity is not just about self concept and related ideas of self-esteem and self-confidence but also about social identity and the sense of awareness and belonging to a group or to a place (Falk and Balatti 2004) that develops as trainees learn new skills and is particularly important for Indigenous learners (Higgins and Butler 2007). In this way identity forms part of the social capital developed through learning (Falk and Kilpatrick 2000).

The knowledge and skills that many Indigenous workers bring with them may also be devalued in some sectors. Wearne et al (2008:8) note that ‘there is far less consideration given to use of Indigenous Knowledge in health and social welfare programs’ than in scientific fields such as natural resource management, where there are many examples of the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge and traditional ecological knowledge into scientific research and practice (e.g. Arbon et al. 2003; North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance 2006; Putnis et al. 2007; Smallacombe et al. 2007; Hodgkinson and Hodgkinson 2008). System change is required for effective inclusion of Indigenous knowledge and workers.

Blagg (2008:53), talks about ‘hybrid initiatives’ that sit between the ‘Aboriginal domain’ and the ‘non-Aboriginal domain’ in a kind of liminal space where syncretic processes are created at the points of intersection between these domains. They are:

Independent of the system and work within Aboriginal terms of reference and use Aboriginal notions of cultural authority. They are not traditional structures but they represent a mechanism by which Aboriginal people can manage problems in an Aboriginal way.(p. 53)

Figure 1. Blagg's (2008:54-55) model of initiatives between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal domains



Indigenous ownership may mean that aspects of Indigenous or Traditional Knowledge are incorporated into programs.

3.4 Gender

Gendered policy is becoming more common. For medical conditions such as heart disease, for instance, there is growing awareness that it is a mistake to treat all patients using interventions designed for the most statistically common pattern (heart attacks affecting adult men in this case); women and younger patients may have quite different symptoms of heart attacks. Although there has been a move in some areas to label as 'gendered violence policy' an almost exclusive focus on the most statistically common pattern (men attacking their female partners in this case), there are a number of researchers and programs that are calling for a recognition of the different dynamics of family violence and the need for a wider range of responses, including interventions for female perpetrators and male victims as well as better responses to same sex intimate partner violence Mulroney and Chan 2005:14).

It also appears that rates of female and male-initiated violence may be growing more similar over time. An American study (National Institutes of Health 2004) noted that

There is evidence that the ratio of male to female violence has changed in the past few decades, with the gap in gendered violence rates closing by half.' (p.19)

In both Australia and Canada (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics 2008:15), there are similar signs, with female-initiated violence rates holding steady and male-initiated violence rates, which are still much higher, dropping.

A major Canadian survey found that male-initiated violence, as reported to the survey by their female partners, had decreased over the previous six years, although female initiated violence reported to the survey by male partners was holding steady (Statistics Canada 2005a). Homicide rates in Australia show the same trend, with male offender rates falling and female rates relatively unchanged (Dearden and Jones 2008).

However, violence by males remains much higher than female violence. Intimate partner violence accounted for 27 per cent of Australian homicides between 1989 and 1996; 77 per cent involved a male killing a female and 21 per cent a female killing a male, with two per cent involving same sex partners (Carcach et al. 1998). Although estimates vary of the statistical incidence of female perpetrators and male victims, studies that also track severity and impact of violence note that female victims are more likely to live in fear due to the violence, to receive serious injuries, be hospitalised and die due to intimate partner violence (Mulroney and Chan 2005; Statistics Canada 2005a). The Canadian study notes that fearing for their life was particularly true of Aboriginal victim respondents (33 per cent, versus 22 per cent for non-Aboriginal respondents).

Even setting aside the statistical incidence of male violence victims and female perpetrators, some studies show that there are benefits in responding to violence in ways that do not label males as 'perpetrators' and females as 'victims'. Simpson (2003), writing about an Australian women's shelter discussed the change processes required to move from a 'restrictive and narrow' feminist crisis service orientation in 1997 to one which aims to work respectfully with all people affected by domestic violence' including men. Changes in language were a major part of the shift, with a rejection of terms such as 'victim' and 'perpetrator'.

With the use of perpetrator there was no language to describe a place that reflected that a man could take responsibility for his behaviour and change... We have worked with many men who held hopes and dreams for their relationships and lives that are not fulfilled because of their use of violence and abuse; we also work to assist them to make change that may connect them back to those distant hopes and dreams. For these reasons, we now use the language of 'men who use violence in their relationships'... We see this term as respectful because it contains more of an invitation to change because it does not speak to his whole identity. Nor does it come from a position of blame. (Simpson 2003, p. 7)

Simpson notes that staff find 'that we can engage respectfully with many [but by no means all] men who use violence and/or abuse in their relationships. In the short-term, this might lead to him making a decision to leave the house for the night or sleeping in another room and agreeing to not go near his partner. There are many examples where our changes demonstrate a direct and immediate impact on women's and children's safety (Simpson 2003:8).

These changes also led to increased satisfaction with women who had been subjected to domestic violence (who would once have been termed 'victims' or 'family violence survivors', again making the violence part of their identity) as they felt that instead of staff having set ideas about what their solutions should be and perceiving that the service model tried to break up their families, that they were listened to and respected as individuals. Simpson notes that although the change process was worthwhile, it was also 'very difficult'.

3.5 Evaluation issues

Even as policy makers have come to have higher expectations of the quality of policy-informing evidence evaluators can provide, the resourcing of evaluations—and the time allocated for them—has declined, in some cases resulting in calls for outcome data when projects are still in a developmental stage, although the literature notes that ‘to be successful, outcome evaluations require that a program is well established and stable’ (Tomison 2000:3). This evaluation also occurred at a very early stage of Safe Places operations, when they could well be viewed as still being in a developmental stage.

Perhaps for such reasons, many authors note a lack of evaluations in areas of special importance to this report, such as violence prevention programs (Mulroney 2003), and outcomes of interventions for abused women (Laing 2003a). Remote community evaluations pose particular challenges (Guenther 2008). Where such evaluations have occurred (e.g. Blagg 2000; Memmott et al. 2006), the authors have been forced to focus on principles of good practice or components of ‘promising practice’, in view of the lack of quantitative, ‘scientific’ evidence available.

The emphasis on government financial accountability has sometimes dictated a focus in evaluations that does not distinguish between outputs and outcomes, or places more emphasis on accountability to funders than on outcomes for clients (Rawsthorne and Shaver 2008). To clarify such issues, some authors (e.g. Vinson 2009) are calling for more use of tools such as ‘program logic’, which enables stakeholders to build a shared understanding and common expectations of the project, identify what the evaluation questions should be and which performance measures are key, and ensures that the evaluation can create a ‘performance story’ that is able to legitimately attribute results to the project (McLaughlin and Jordan 2004).

However, with family violence in particular, practitioners may be unwilling or unable to support evaluations, particularly if they involve traumatised clients (Laing 2003a), and there may also be methodological difficulties for evaluators seeking accurate information on perpetrator behaviour and attitudes (Laing 2003b). The difficulty is compounded by the multiplicity of agencies that may be involved in a family violence case, from family support services to police, medical and legal services, as well as the justice system and perhaps prison or community corrections personnel. Some focus on the adult victim, some on the perpetrator, others on the children exposed to violence; all have different data recording systems which are incompatible with each other, and often access is made difficult for ‘external’ partners. Given the complexity of most violence interventions, triangulated data is required to clarify disparate perspectives and build actionable evidence, so this lack of compatibility between databases is an issue for evaluators as well as practitioners.

Guenther and Arnott (2008) note that problems in data entry and collation within agencies complicate this situation further and make the evaluator’s task even more difficult, with workers perhaps showing signs of what some researchers have termed ‘evaluation anxiety’ (Donaldson et al. 2002). As Memmott notes, this can be frustrating when an evaluator believes that a project is doing excellent work but cannot document results.

From our experience, we suspect that good practices are widespread, if not sporadic in the Indigenous family violence sector but due to the priorities of addressing this problem, Indigenous service providers are seldom able or even motivated to document these practices. (Memmott et al. 2006)

Other difficulties occur when the evaluation is located in an Indigenous community. Scougall (2006) notes that, although the ideal evaluator

'is someone in close relationship with the community, employing culturally sensitive methods, fostering broad community involvement, transferring evaluation skills and contributing to a process of empowerment and positive social change...[the] hard reality is that evaluators are most often outsiders with limited resources and precious little time to spend in the field'. (p. 49)

As well as cultural issues, language and literacy issues may require innovative evaluation approaches (Lackman et al. 1997); new tools and processes are being developed for remote communities—some of these have emerged from the work of the FVPP projects in the Northern Territory (e.g. Arnott et al. 2007). There have been calls for family violence evaluations to use measures which are less deficit-focused (e.g. police reports, restraining orders, injuries, nights in shelters and refuges, imprisonment) and incorporate measures of healthy family and community functioning. Apart from some isolated instruments such as the Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey, there are few accepted measures of family functioning. The development of such measures will be challenging, requiring consideration of the multi-faceted nature of family functioning, and acknowledging that Indigenous families often have different dynamics and strengths than non-Indigenous families (Walker and Shepherd 2008).

4 Methodology

4.1 Evaluation approach

The evaluation of Safe Places required a mixed-method approach that drew on a combination of data sources—quantitative and qualitative. Such approaches help explain what has occurred and how or why things happened using a combination of inductive and deductive analytical tools (see Johnson and Christensen 2004, page 18). ‘In many cases both qualitative and quantitative methods should be used together’ (Patton 2008:438). Stufflebeam and Shinkfield (2007) suggest that ‘Use of both quantitative and qualitative methods is intended to ensure dependable feedback on a wide range of questions...’. This evaluation sets out to do just that. The evaluation builds on an analysis of issues presented in 2008 by SPiL (Arnott et al. 2008). The evaluation is largely formative in the sense that it can offer advice for the future development of the program. However, the evaluation does have summative elements (for example in its examination of past records and reports). The utility of the evaluation is in its ability to inform the future development of Safe Places in the Northern Territory and to offer an informed assessment of the learnings that are emerging from the initiative.

The methodology outlined in the Scope of Work document included the following two main elements:

1. Analysis of quantitative data collected—to be provided by Northern Territory Families and Children (NTFC) and which would include quarterly reports submitted to FaHCSIA plus usage data (education programs and workers support/development as well as Family Violence clients) plus client and family ‘thermometers’, Family Healing Plan data, and any other data comparing family functioning in months preceding and following Safe Place intervention, looking at factors such as: police and child protection involvement with family, children’s school attendance and performance, treatment at clinic for injuries. All Safe Places data was to be provided in de-identified format, but data entry was to include a unique identifier that will enable the researchers to compare pre and post interventions by individual case;
2. Semi-structured interviews with selected stakeholders in the following communities: Nguiu, Ntaria, Lajamanu, Peppimenarti and Apatula; and
3. Letter to stakeholders in other communities offering the opportunity to provide input on Safe Places.

The stakeholders in communities were proposed to include:

- Elders Cultural Reference Group,
- Workers,
- Local Police,
- Other stakeholders linked to Safe Places through referrals and/or delivering programs at Safe Places,
- School and clinic stakeholders, and if feasible and ethically appropriate
- Client family members.

One or more focus groups with Safe Places team members (i.e. team members in Darwin) on issues encountered in implementing the service model and their perceptions of the community’s acceptance of and readiness for the Safe Places

Interviews were to be audio-recorded and transcribed. Analysis of qualitative data collected from interviews was carried out to identify key themes, issues and relationships between factors, using qualitative data analysis software. The report was to summarise the findings as they responded to the evaluation questions.

4.2 *Timeline of events*

Table 1 shows a timeline of key events relevant to the evaluation.

Table 1. Timeline of milestones relevant to the evaluation

Date	Milestone
April 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation Scope of Work finalised
May 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenders issued • Funding received 22 May, 2009
June 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethics application submitted and visits and interviews instigated • Site visits planned and commenced for all communities • Interim report submitted
July 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued collection of data • Analysis of data • Site visits completed
August 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data from Safe Places forms received • Literature review conducted • Finalisation of draft evaluation report

4.3 *Evaluation questions*

The following overarching evaluation questions are proposed for the Safe Places evaluation.

1. What are the emerging and expected outcomes of Safe Places as they are being rolled out into communities across the Northern Territory?
2. How is the implementation of Safe Places working towards addressing issues of: a) family function; b) health and well-being of families and communities, including victim safety; c) attitudes and perceptions about community and child safety, and family violence?
3. What are the emerging issues that need to be addressed with the regard to local Indigenous workforce development in those communities?
4. To what extent are service and service linkage, data and evidence gaps being filled (or not) by Safe Places?
5. How effective are, and what changes should be made to, data collection tools and processes?

4.4 *Data collection*

Consistent with a mixed methods approach and the requirements of the evaluation more generally, a number of data sources were used in the preparation of this report. These sources included:

- Meeting minutes;
- Recorded interviews;
- Evaluation observation notes; and
- Other relevant documents as they became available.

Qualitative data collection activities were conducted during June and July 2009. A total of 24 interviews were conducted with some 40 participants.

Data from Safe Places monitoring forms was also provided to the evaluation team for analysis. A total of 28 forms, including 19 intake forms, were provided.

5 Findings

The findings presented in this section represent a summary of the processes, program outputs and outcomes that emerged over the life of the trial. They are based on the combination of observations, quantitative and qualitative data collected by the evaluation team.

5.1 Review of program development

During 2007/08 and 2008/09, the Northern Territory Department of Health and Community Services (now Department of Health and Families) through the Family and Children's Services Program (now Northern Territory Families and Children) contracted the Learning Research Group (now the Social Partnerships in Learning consortium, or 'SPiL') at Charles Darwin University to undertake a series of project reviews and evaluations of nine Family Violence Prevention Program (FVPP) projects. The SPiL team also carried out case study research on the Family Support Package set of projects which included the (then) Safe houses phase I project.

The findings from these reviews and evaluations have now emerged (see Arnott et al. 2008; Arnott et al. 2009) and a series of challenges and findings were identified for further exploration. The scope of work for this project included the continued evaluation of the Safe Places program. As part of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Australian Government and the Northern Territory Government, an evaluation report for the Safe Place project was required. The outputs were to include:

1. By the end of June the production of an interim evaluation report ready to go to FaHCSIA containing a general framework for the evaluation, information on directions, themes arising and process to date.
2. Draft evaluation report to be submitted by 31 July 2009.
3. Completed final report by 30 September, 2009.

5.2 *Quantitative data from Safe Places forms*

Forms completed by Safe Places workers were collated, deidentified and provided to SPiL for analysis. The data is summarised by community and form in Table 2, below. The table shows a total of 17 intakes were processed and recorded (with an additional two forms not clearly identified but for the purpose of analysis are assumed to be intake forms).

s47F - personal privacy

s47F - personal privacy

5.3 Qualitative data from interviews, reports and observations

The discussion of the findings is structured in such a way as to focus on particular 'layers' of the program. Due to the highly interrelated nature of events within the program this is far from a perfect device, but it does provide clearer explanation of events from the different perspectives. It needs to be clearly remembered that the program, in terms of roll out and day-to-day operations, is really in its very early stages.

5.3.1 Community level themes

Below is a vignette of generalised activities undertaken by Safe Place workers. This vignette provides a snapshot of both the range of activities they undertake and the challenges they face. It should be viewed as a snapshot of *potential* activity. As noted below such continued activity is rare on most Safe Place communities.

The workers are on 24 hour call outs and once the woman is in the Safe Place for the night the regular worker call in the casual staff to stay with the woman until morning.

Daily activities include:

- Ensure the woman is feeling okay and seek medical service if needed
- Worker fill in intake forms and contact relevant support agencies
- Contact the town offices to report incidents and fax forms
- Organise community violence awareness meetings for the women and community members
- Organise community services for men e.g. alcohol programs and anger management
- Work with affected young women, young mothers and the elder women
- Organise and facilitate art and craft activities and shopping
- Organise and facilitate community meetings with service providers from inside and outside the community
- Also organise Safe Place promotion BBQs with community members

At night a woman runs to a Safe Place workers home for shelter when partner is violent. The worker rings night patrol and the police to assist to move the woman to the safe place. If the woman is seriously hurt the clinic will be called to attend and assess the situation for emergency evacuation to the nearest town from the community.

Sometimes women want to go into the town to the women's shelter and often will be transported in by a relative as there is no support vehicle to transport people. If the partner is assessed as dangerous often the police vehicle will escort the vehicle out of the community to a safe distant to avoid any further violence. If the violence is assessed as very serious the woman is flown to the nearest town, like Alice Springs, Katherine, Tennant Creek, Nhulunbuy or Darwin.

Going to town often causes fear and family infighting. In some instances the police are notified and can provide safety and security for the woman. Involving police and health staff is something that the community is still dealing with due to fear and uncertainty about what happens to their children under the Intervention.

A range of themes emerged from data collected from participants at the community level, including both Safe Place community workers and other agencies/stakeholders. These are discussed briefly under theme headings below.

5.3.2 Perceptions about the appearance of Safe Places

Community workers and other Indigenous community members had wide ranging attitudes to the Safe Place buildings. On the one hand it was reported that the buildings were feared by many as a place where women might lose their children and men felt too 'shamed' to attend the men's place. This has led to many women victims continuing to go to workers' (or other women's houses) and to the women's centre, not the Safe Place. On the other hand a number

of people felt that the buildings were an asset to the community, and the workers in particular felt that the men's and women's places will provide a useful and needed service.

When the buildings were first constructed they were, when viewed from the outside, imposing places with high barbed wire fences, bars on windows, stark lighting and drab colours. However, there was intent to provide some beautification (planting of trees and shrubs) – which has, by and large, been initiated (in conjunction with Greening Australia). Some Safe Places have also been painted to soften their profile, and more work of this type is expected in the future.

Thus, in effect, there were barriers created both by the image and the perception of the Safe Places. As noted, there have been attempts to make the buildings more attractive and indeed once inside the buildings they are clean and can be made reasonably smart. Many workers feel that it is a matter of bringing people in past the fences to see the inside and so better appreciate the Safe Place. Utilisation of the places as centres for allied services and programs will then break down the perceptual barriers now in existence. Ideas such as barbecues and other social and work activities are being planned to see the facilities better utilised and so increase community familiarity with the centres.

Many men in particular see the Men's Places as potentially an asset and the first time that men have had a dedicated facility in the community to address their needs and issues. This idea, however, is closely linked with the view, described in more detail below, that the Men's Place can be a hub for a range of activities.

5.3.3 Community perceptions of building uses

The idea of the Safe Places becoming a focus of a range of programs/courses/activities, acting as a community 'hub' for such, was strong among community members and most others interviewed for the evaluation. One of the reasons for this view included the early belief by those developing the program in the need to see Safe Places as the centre of education and other activities surrounding issues of family violence and family well-being. It was felt that the Safe Places could act as a focus for youth, outreach and cultural transition activities and so engage with some of the fundamental issues underpinning family and community violence.

It is also apparent that while the primary purpose for the Safe Places is crisis response and follow up, this does not occur every day. There remains limited activity of this nature in Men's Places while in Women's Places it varies from limited to extensive activity depending on the community. It also needs to be remembered that such activity often occurs at night when workers are called out to deal with an issue of family violence (currently Women's pPlace workers are employed during the day, while at least one Men's Place intends to move to a split shift arrangement based on youth and men's activity in the community). So in many respects, with four part time workers employed, there are lengthy periods of time when there is little primary activity for many Safe Place workers.

Further to the notion that the Safe Places could provide cultural transition activities (such as reintroducing young people to country and lore) it was made clear on some communities that the issue of family violence was linked in many community members' minds to a loss of lore and knowledge, particularly in the young. There is intuitively a move back to seeing cultural ways and activities that can be a part of a process of healing that will decrease the violence.

There are thus strong reasons to continue to develop the role of the Safe Places. It is also likely that the Men's Places will benefit by being associated with the notions of adult and youth learning and cultural transition. This will require training and support for this development as

well as a positive view of the Men's Places not as places primarily for perpetrators (a negative and shameful approach and which, as discussed in the literature review above, has been found even by urban shelter workers to be counter-productive), but instead as places for healing men of the damage they have received through colonisation and other issues in their personal lives which contribute to ongoing anger and violence. There are also implications here concerning how project officers may best support such development, acknowledging the resources required, their own life histories, and issues of governance.

5.3.4 Community workers perspectives

Training and support

A point raised by most community workers (and a number of the other stakeholders in the communities involved) concerned various aspects of training and support. Many community workers felt that they were ready with ideas to make the Safe Place work well, while others reported that they felt unprepared for the job even though a number of them had had prior experience in the area of family violence. Some felt that they needed more knowledge of aspects of family violence (this concern also relates to the need to understand mandatory reporting legislation); others were not confident in their day to day operational work, while yet others were uncertain about what they could do especially in terms of 'hub' operation.

This uncertainty about job expectations was further heightened in their belief that the project officers had not spent enough time either training them or supporting their work. (This situation is further developed and explained in 5.3.2 below as it is clear that there were not enough visiting project officers available in the time allowed to contact communities with the frequency required). Workers felt that they required not only further training and modelling (through a more extensive and intensive on-site program), but also more regular contact with Darwin based project officers.

The perceived lack of training and support was exacerbated by visiting staff turnover and the timeframe for the opening of the centres. In some instances this made it difficult for staff in the communities to build up rapport and trust with the project officers. There was a feeling among some that they [the community workers] were also not trusted by some visiting project officers. Examples of being checked on to see if they were at work (in one instance a woman project officer had checked on men at a men's centre, which was not culturally appropriate) and other instances of directive behaviour may have eroded the original trust building and negotiated approach used by the project visiting teams.

Part of this may well have been a spin off from the speed of the openings and the limited contact from Darwin staff. However, the ratio of staff available to recruit, support and mentor Safe Place workers appears very low. Using the Remote Aboriginal Family and Community Worker (RAFCW) program as a comparison, this initiative provides a staff support/monitoring person for every three communities on average, each with an average of one full-time equivalent position, often comprised of two part time workers. In contrast, for a substantial period of time the Men's Safe Places had a single worker to cover nine facilities scattered across the entire Northern Territory, each with multiple workers to be recruited, trained, supported and mentored.

Despite these issues of training and support, there was a reasonable level of skills available within the various community Safe Place worker teams and most had 'successfully' engaged in various crisis events and had begun to establish usable networks, including particularly with outside service providers.

Monitoring and reporting

The issue of monitoring and reporting, as observed by the evaluation team, is multi-layered. On the one hand, individual workers did not articulate any major concerns with the monitoring tools that had been designed for their use. On the other hand it was equally evident that workers were not using the forms to capture the kind of activities they were engaging in on a day to day basis. There remain some issues with the forms, for example, they only indicate intake and do not adequately demonstrate issues of effort or time taken.

Technology and infrastructure 'needs'

Community workers have available to them a phone and fax machine within each Safe Place building. A number of them indicated, however, that as most violent events happened at night they only had access to personal phones (where available and with credit) for contact with others. They felt that the need to be able to contact police and Night Patrol (or vice versa) was important and a safety issue. Aspects of their work such as follow up of incidents in the community and night work left them out of communication. Similarly, the lack of a vehicle for their work left them dependent on others. Both situations were issues of concern and increased the belief with some that they were not trusted.

There was also a belief that fax communication was unwieldy and that a computer (most of the workers interviewed had some degree of computer literacy) was a better source of administering their paperwork and communicating with Darwin. In particular it was felt that the monitoring forms and others would be more effective if computer driven and networked with Head Office.

Transport

As noted, there was frustration expressed by some workers concerning the lack of access to a vehicle. If, for example, they needed to move a victim out of the community or visit family for follow up they were reliant on police or another service to do this.

Relationships

Relationships in this instance can be divided into relationships with groups/agencies in the community (such as Police, Night Patrol, and Shires) and those service agencies that are off the communities but visit regularly. In the first instance, generally the relationship with Police was supportive, with perhaps one or two exceptions. The story with the relationship of the Safe Places with Night Patrols was much patchier. There were instances of bad relationships with members of the Night Patrols (probably historical issues), and a general feeling of distance between the two groups. This situation was not helped by some confusion in most communities visited regarding the role of Shires (who manage the Night Patrols) and the relationship between GBMs, Shire and community agencies did not seem clear to most participants in the study. It also needs to be remembered that the Night Patrols and Safe Houses do not work the same hours (with the exception of the possible split shift arrangement being mooted in one particular community). The relationship of Shire members (such as CEOs) with the Safe Places is supportive and improving in some communities, although some Shire officers felt that there had been limited negotiation or discussion concerning the placement and construction of Safe Places in their community. Some suggested that while they see themselves as supportive, they are not funded to support Safe Places and that their limited funding base is mostly directed at 'roads and rubbish'.

There were members of service provider agencies who were concerned about some community worker's level of training, and knowledge of how to work in the field of family violence. To some degree this will be alleviated through the Certificate I-III training. However,

in the meantime it remains a concern in what can be a difficult and dangerous job, requiring effective partnerships between Safe Place workers and service provider agencies to ensure worker safety and support and provision of the range of programs needed to achieve desired outcomes for individuals and families.

Elders Cultural Reference Group

The initial idea of ensuring that there was an Indigenous governance structure through something like an Elder Cultural Reference group for Safe Places has had a patchy evolution. On many communities it has become simply a small group of Elders who have voiced their approval for the process. While this could be seen to be a critical element of the community ownership and engagement process, it requires review and the application of additional resources and strategies to be applied.

Employment

In terms of recruitment it is not always evident that the appropriate workers have been recruited (in one community for example, only one clan is represented). The employment of Safe Place community workers is further described below, but the employment of part time casual workers may require review as the need for leadership evolves (see Section Recruitment, page 39). Getting the right people is, as always, key to a successful program.

5.3.5 Project leader level themes

The idea of visiting teams was established early in 2008. Initially a team of 5-6 people were recruited to visit communities to consult and negotiate on the implementation of 22 Safe Places. Both men and women made up the team and both Indigenous and non-Indigenous project officers, with a majority being Indigenous. Initially they worked as a men's and a women's team, but they sometimes visited together. Later a number of teams, made up of pairs of project officers, were assigned various community Safe Places to 'case manage'.

The intent of these teams moved from initial negotiation and then training/educating (Phase I) to recruitment, employment and further training in preparation for the opening of most of the Safe Places in the first half of 2009 (Phase II). There was strong agreement throughout the data collected for the evaluation supporting the necessity of having Indigenous staff working to negotiate and work in the communities concerned. However, a variety of challenges confronted these teams.

They were required (due to the nature of the task) to either have had experience and skills in a range of areas or to develop those skills on-the-job. Initially, they required strong negotiation skills, and it proved invaluable to have Indigenous team members who were familiar with cultural protocols and knowledge, many with additional skills to allow them to effectively explain and begin the information and training process concerning both Safe Places and Indigenous Family Violence issues with community members. As this program's effectiveness was quite dependent on embedding the Safe Places into each community, it was also important that operational team members had a commitment to community development principles (see, for example, Burdon Torzillo 2008).

By the second half of 2008 and early 2009 when the construction of the Safe Places was nearly complete, the role of the operational teams moved to a phase of preparing the facilities for opening. This entailed, among other things, continued community discussion to recruit Safe Places workers and then the following selection and addressing of administrative detail usual in recruiting to government positions, particularly Indigenous remote area employment. As

such, this required additional skill sets and knowledge in regards to administration and employment systems. There was also a strong component of training for employment and the administrative operations of each Safe Place (different from training regarding Indigenous family violence).

The sense of urgency to open the Safe Places grew in the 2009 New Year. This also added pressure to the teams and they were spending extended time in the field. For many it also seemed to be a change in direction in that initially they believed strongly in the need to bring the Aboriginal community members into the governance of the program. However, the need to meet deadlines and other milestones, which in some communities they felt were unreasonable, made it appear that the program became more top-down and directive. It may have also been a resource issue as too few project officers dealt with too many Safe Places in too short a time period. In this context, as outlined below, a number of challenges emerged.

Range of skills required

The team members came from different backgrounds – many from the NGO sector. While they had real strengths, some did not have all the skill sets required in this phase, particularly in light of the tight timelines available. In addition, the extensive bush trips were not necessarily conducive to completing system and office obligations. They required administrative support. Thus, there were instances of slow recruitment of workers, paperwork going missing and workers not being paid for several weeks, affecting morale and credibility. The requirement of changing priorities within the role meant that operational team members had to move mindsets and have, or acquire, new skills. Such professional development generally occurred as the job dictated, although there are two issues here, the changing role and therefore changes to mind and skill set, and the time and opportunity to acquire these.

Change of role

A number of project officers noted a change of role and direction. It appeared to them that there was a change from working with the community to embed the Safe Places, to a rush to open them and complete the necessary administrative requirements. This often meant that the priority appeared to be compliance with centralised directions, and this was perceived to be a change to a 'top down' approach.

Timeline

It needs to be noted that at the beginning of the program the opening of the Safe Places was to occur by June, 2008 (the extent of funding at that time). Issues such as VOCs and the late indication of continued funding (May 2008) meant that while the need to continue selection processes and relationships with communities needed to occur, through the third quarter of 2008 little progress could be made in the communities. This situation placed pressure on the requirement for a new 'opening date' of March 2009. This meant that the period between when some certainty returned to the continued development of the program (November 2008) and the opening through to March, 2009 (realising that the December-January period is a 'slow' one when both weather and bush ceremonies make it difficult to access community members) was a short period of time to open 22 Safe Places - particularly allowing for the differences in the contexts of those communities. Also, earlier momentum had been lost and some potential workers who had undergone training and committed to the program in mid-2008 had taken up other opportunities during the program hiatus.

Staff turnover

At this point operational team staff were thinly stretched as they endeavoured to prepare 20 plus Safe Places for opening. Added to the above were the stress of bush trips (often driving

long distances) with large amounts of time away from family, the number of sites to be developed, working with Aboriginal sorry business and ceremonies, it is not surprising that tensions built within the operational team staff and a number of them left the program. A number of them felt as though they had not been supported well in their changing roles. Changing project officers mid stream also impacted on community workers who had built up rapport with them. This accelerated during the first half of 2009. The stress of travelling and driving large distances remains as a health and safety factor for project officers.

While a number of staff have been replaced, at the point of writing there remains only one male staff member now available to cover the nine men's Safe Places and this situation has continued for some months. (Further staff are to be employed shortly). This is untenable for the smooth development of men's Safe Places. There was also a change of department manager in November, 2008 and a change in roles for a number of staff within the unit.

Recruitment

The initial idea was that potential community workers would be identified through discussions with community members, including the cultural advisory group, to ensure that the workers were committed and appropriate for the task (for example, were the right 'mix' of clan representatives available). While to some degree this occurred on a number of communities, the issue of the VOCs, and other issues, caused a hiatus and lost many potential workers and momentum was lost. On re-commencing the process some months later, difficulties included time constraints and the issues of recruiting community members from a small workforce base where people with skills are under demand from a range of other programs. As such recruitment was more ad hoc and was also impacted by administrative and system constraints (including slow and late payment of worker salaries).

There is a move in at least one community to transfer to a 'split shift' arrangement for a Men's Safe Place. It is felt that it is better to have men available in terms of a morning shift and an evening shift – in this way connecting better to when there is most activity in the community. As one of the interview participants noted:

The men have moved to this model for a variety of reasons including better synergy and linkages with night patrol, an increase in sustained employment by the men (as they are able to share full time roles across more people), support by the traditional owners and elders on community, an increased sense of privacy for the men and therefore an increase likelihood of use in the safe place.

The system is grappling with this and as a result a number of men will be placed on casual part time arrangements. While seemingly a good response to a community need that should see beneficial results, the work conditions of those workers have been impacted on (for example, leave loading and sick leave) and the issue of the move to casual rather than full time employment (e.g. security, and promotion) remains an issue to be aware of.

Training and support

As discussed above, initially training was for understanding and working through issues of Indigenous family violence and then became more involved with work preparedness. In the early development of organisational structures regarding the employment of workers in the Safe Places it was intended to have a fulltime coordinator, a youth officer and part time administrative support at each site. There was also the intention to establish a mentoring program utilising in-community personnel (such a program is mooted to be re-instated in Phase III of Safe Place development). As the program evolved workers tended to be employed

at the one level (AO3) and most (for example, the men) were employed as casuals (usually four part time workers per Safe Place). These arrangements placed pressure on the program in terms of training and support. Workers in each site initially underwent a week of on-site training in work preparedness by the operational teams.

It was intended that operational teams would visit each of their communities on at least a monthly basis and have regular phone contact. Early on a 'hotline/warmline' for workers issues was mooted. Particularly as operational staff teams were diminished through turnover, these aims were not achievable. Individual operational team members used personal phones to keep in touch with community workers on an irregular, usually reactive basis. This meant that training and support of the workers was at best patchy. If we compare this situation with the RAFCWs who were contacting staff at least every two days by phone (and often talking every day), visiting frequently (or bringing workers in to Darwin), and have a ratio of three FTE workers to one coordinator (while currently it could be said that the male Safe Place project officer has over 30 workers to recruit/manage/train) it is little wonder that training and support are problematic issues.

It should be noted, however, that the Safe Place Unit is aware of many of these issues and are intending (when fully staffed) to, for example:

- Move to a weekly phone meeting time with workers;
- Employ (contract let) Industries Services Training (IST) to provide an intensive job readiness program;
- Further develop a mentoring program (which is complicated administratively in that DEEWR need to lock in an employer to provide mentoring, while the Northern Territory Government does not yet have a clear sense from the Australian Government about who the employer will be over the next 12 months but expect clarity shortly); and
- Carry out preliminary work that will involve an audit of the current full and part time staff to assess which staff have Certificates I to III in Community Services – this will possibly be carried out by a training organisation such as the Council For Aboriginal Alcohol Program Services (CAAPS) Inc.

All these developments are required in the current Safe Place context. The ratio of support staff to remote workers also needs to be revisited.

Relationships

It was generally believed that the Safe Places would require strong links into the community and strong connections to a range of other service providers both on and off community. In the community it was seen that Night Patrols in particular should have a strong affiliation to Safe Places (this point will be dealt with below). As project officers within the Operational Team saw it, it remains necessary to connect other service agencies to the Safe Places so that they act as a 'Hub' for activities relevant to Indigenous Family Violence. This situation would have a range of potentially positive outcomes, also discussed further below. However, while Operational Teams continued to work through GBMs on each community, the situation with Shires and Police, for example, remain unclear. The relationships between these two agencies and the Safe Places vary with different communities. These relationships are important, in that the Shires manage the Night Patrol programs and of course Police need to be involved with offences. Many project officers felt that while it was necessary for relationships to develop in the community that MoUs would also support the process, and these are being considered and developed.

System level themes

In terms of Northern Territory Government and Australian Government management there were a range of points raised. For example, the relationship between FaHCSIA and Northern Territory Government personnel in the project was carried out through a combination of reports, meetings and other interactions which were felt to be appropriate to carry through the project. In particular the recent completion of the *Implementation Plan for the Family Support Package* will provide funding surety and the ability to plan the program through short and medium term scenarios. This is important as it is an opportunity to think clearly through and develop strategies for a number of the issues outlined in this report. Now that there is an agreement between the Northern Territory Government and Australian Government for three years of funding, some stability and security can be assured for the program in that staff, for example, can move from the insecurity of short term contracts to a longer term outlook. The three year implementation plan includes the move from complete Northern Territory Government operations of Safe Places to the day to day operations being phased over to NGOs or Shires, or a combination of both over the next 12 months. There are a range of challenges here and a number of questions that will require answers, including:

- Are partnerships between Shires and NGOs feasible?
- While it would be expected that Shires provide a strong in-community base to support the Safe Places, do they have the perspective and desire to embrace community social programs?
- Will in fact the potential NGOs and Shires have the capability or capacity to work in this field? If not, what resources will be available to build capability and capacity where it is required?
- Will there be separate management of Men's Places and Women's Places, with potentially different groups managing each of these? Will management be regional rather than gendered, reflecting Shire boundaries? Could each facility potentially be under separate management?
- Will there be a selected 'model' of practice or will a range of models have to be designed around factors such as region, capability and capacity?
- What is the role of the Northern Territory Government, and FaHCSIA in such a model, or will different scenarios require different support from the Northern Territory Government?
- What is the best timing for the introduction of this model(s)?

The information required to make adequate decisions regarding these questions will only be available once a tendering or expression of interest process has gauged the level of interest from agencies in accepting a role in Safe Place development. There will also need to be some clarity concerning the respective roles of the GBM, Shires and the program. At present, the program informs GBMs and generally has their support. However, in the community the relationship between GBMs and the Shire can vary and there is no direct line association.

There was a strong belief from those interviewed that community Safe Places will develop their own character over time that best allows them to carry out their role in their respective communities. This view sits well with the idea of a 'hub' development approach where communities are encouraged and supported to become a focus for issues of community well-being. In the meantime issues of training and mentoring, understanding the best ways to support the 'hub' approach, how best to support the Men's Places (for example, cultural transition), and the support and maintenance of staff are crucial to the next phase of the Safe Places program.

It is important to also consider the role of future project officers/visiting team in the next phase of operations. Their role may well change again as the NGO/Shire operations model takes root. The model(s) that the Northern Territory Government move to under such arrangements may well vary from a contract monitoring role to a support role that includes training and review.

5.3.6 Summary

There are a range of consistent themes that emerge from the data. Some of these are transitional issues as the move to fully operationalise the Safe Places has placed strain, for example, on lines of communication, training and support and adequate staffing and the maintenance of such. However, for simplicity the major challenges can be understood through the following (interrelated) headings.

Resourcing and timelines

Adequate resources need to be available in at least three domains, employment and maintenance of staff, training and support, and 'hub development'. Also, as stated in a number of previous reports (Arnott et al. 2008 and Arnott et al. 2009), each of the Safe Place communities are different, have different levels of family violence, different levels of expertise available, have different levels of support in the community and are at different stages of development. Time is required to develop the trust, the skills and support and monitoring systems and these factors will engage over different periods of time in different communities.

Employment

A range of challenges remain in regard to recruitment, employment circumstances and worker conditions. It may be that further recruitment has to take place to ensure aspects such as 'clan coverage' is maintained. It may also be that a part time casual approach to staffing is not advantageous over time for issues of leadership, security and stability of staff and career path security and credibility. It remains important that further recruitment of community workers be approached via elders and community structures.

Training and support (including mentoring)

A range of challenges remain apparent in the area of training and support, although the Safe Places unit is aware of many of these issues and does have some plans in place to alleviate them. It was stated in the *Case Study Family Support Package* (Arnott et al. 2008:11) report that, *How well [community based] staff are managed and supported could well be critical to the sustainability of these programs*. This point still remains cogent. There are in fact a number of areas that require further training support. The mooted community based mentoring or support arrangement and other training approaches currently in train need to be fast tracked and implemented. This will require appropriate staffing levels to regain some of the loss of training momentum in a number of Safe Places and the associated loss of confidence in the program in some communities.

Additionally, the issue of 'hub' development requires further defining and understanding. It is a role that includes elements of networking, brokering and facilitating activities. These activities require skills to activate and while project officers need to understand such skills they must also be able to support the community workers to incorporate cultural knowledge into the process.

In terms of the capability of current community workers it is important that there is an audit of their skills and work practices so that the training may be commensurate with the task required. The skills may not always align with formal qualifications; some workers may have

formidable skills and experience which can be recognised in the audit, even if they have not had the opportunity to acquire certificates. We believe that this process will begin in the near future and that communities where there are both Men's and Women's Safe Places will be audited first. This audit should then become a platform for an enhanced training program. Such an audit will also require an understanding and enumeration of Indigenous skills and knowledge brought to the task of Safe Place community worker.

Mediating risk

There are a range of risks relating to health and safety that need to be noted. These include:

1. For project officers there are risks in terms of frequency of travelling to isolated communities, driving long distances and time away from home and family. These risks can be more easily managed with appropriate resources and staffing levels.
2. There are a number of risks associated with the work of the community workers. In the first instance the concern that many of them are not qualified for the work they are doing is a worry. Also, safety aspects of their work, such as the need to work in pairs, require auditing; as family violence workers in communities where they are recognised and their home locations known, they are at substantial risk. Further, the legislation concerning mandatory reporting needs to be assessed for the possibility that it may place workers in greater jeopardy, particularly in cases that result in family breakdown and/or imprisonment. Finally, when working at night community workers do not necessarily have any ready access to a phone or other form of communication if they find themselves in a dangerous situation.

Development of a hub model

There is general agreement about the need to ensure that each Safe Place operates as a hub for a range of associated activities and meetings. The benefits of doing so include:

- The opportunity to focus on and increase activities that may influence some of the core elements driving family violence and include prevention activities as well as crisis response;
- The greater utilisation of the resource;
- A breaking down of barriers and more access to the Safe Places;
- Better networking with service providers; and
- A greater potential to incorporate local community based activities that will assist the process of embedding the Safe Places within their respective communities.

It will need, however, an understanding of the skills required, necessary processes and strong support to utilise the safe places as recognised hubs of activity. Support in this instance including the funds required to attract, manage and at time establish activities as well as establishing partnerships with providers who can deliver appropriate programs through the centres.

Documentation and monitoring

The initial philosophy behind the development of these tools suggested that they should be simple to use and be appropriate for individuals who did not speak English as a first language. It was intended to use symbols like those used for capturing night patrol data. It was also intended that the forms would include elements from the 'thermometers' project. An initial scoping meeting in April 2008 laid the foundation for the development of tools by establishing a minimum dataset. This minimum dataset was to include:

1. Client information;
2. Intake information;
3. A safety plan;
4. Case management forms;
5. Information and release forms; and
6. Information about safe house stays.

Items three and five in the list above were to be completed by Safe Places staff.

It soon became evident that a number of forms included a degree of complexity that was not originally envisaged. However, it was deemed important from a case management and record management perspective to gather information of this kind. The evaluation team was advised that those responsible for filling out the forms had adequate levels of English literacy and numeracy and should not have any problems filling out the forms.

At the end of the process list of the forms created by the end of July 2008 included:

1. Entry and exit records;
2. Intake forms;
3. Case planning/overview forms;
4. Closure forms; and
5. Follow-up forms.

The implementation of these forms was left to staff. Staff were to be trained in the use of the forms and there was some opportunity for the CDU evaluation team to observe this training process. It was reported that generally staff were happy with the intake forms. It is not clear to what extent data entry was followed up by Safe House managers. Nor is it clear from their responses if they undertook any analysis of the data that did come in from communities.

Into the future

It may well be how the number of interrelated elements described above is dealt with that provides ongoing sustainability to the Safe Places program. Included in this milieu is the complex question of the movement of operations to an NGO or Shire operation (and the attendant issues of the role of the Northern Territory Government in supporting what are potentially a number of models in different regions. The way in which these factors play out will hopefully add certainty to the program. There are critical questions concerning the ongoing relationship development and negotiations with communities, the treatment and training of community workers, the advancement of Indigenous governance, and the support provided to each Safe Place.

6 Response to the evaluation questions

6.1 What are the emerging and expected outcomes of Safe Places as they are being rolled out into communities across the Northern Territory?

Emerging outcomes noted by the evaluation team have included:

- Increased employment and skill development opportunities for Indigenous people in communities where Safe Places are established;
- Raised profile of the need to address issues related to violence in communities;

- An additional, potentially useful asset that communities with Safe Places can draw on and use in a variety of ways, which was not there before;
- Opportunity for additional support for existing community-led initiatives such as Night Patrol;
- Opportunity for improved synergy between services already offered to communities (e.g. with police, community corrections, health and child protection services, legal services);
- The emergence of a model that men can connect with and take some ownership for the combined needs of both the community and the goals of government departments; and
- Reduced risk for individuals identified in the community as 'strong women' who could be asked to help—they now have a centre from which to work.

These early outcomes are yet to be tried and proven over the long term but we see that Safe Places offer an important space within their communities to achieve significantly more than is currently available. To some extent these emerging outcomes are also a reflection of the expected outcomes. That is, it would be expected that the *opportunities* and *potential* will be translated into tangible expressions of impact as the Safe Places develop in each community.

6.2 How is the implementation of Safe Places working towards addressing issues of: a) family function; b) health and well-being of families and communities, including victim safety; c) attitudes and perceptions about community and child safety, and family violence?

There are early indications that Safe Places staff are beginning to provide a broad role within their communities to address a range of issues that are directly or indirectly related to family function, well-being, community safety and attitudes about violence. However, it is noted that at the time interviews were conducted, Safe Places had only been in operation for about five months. The kind of impacts anticipated by the evaluation question above can be expected to take considerable time. Sustained outcomes and measurable changes are likely to occur with considerable additional investment in training and skill development, supervision, community ownership, along with support for network formation within and outside the community.

While the apparent (recorded) intakes are relatively few across the Northern Territory, it is important to consider that what staff have been asked to record are incidents of dysfunction at a community and family level. The activities that promote family and community *function* (including safety, health and well-being) are not the focus of monitoring forms. There is a strong case to suggest that this needs to change. Further, from a community development perspective, it will be important to embed the aspirations of the community into the model so that local expressions of family function, health and well-being and values associated with child safety and family violence can be embraced. The evaluation team noted that in some cases there was a disjuncture between the aspirations of communities and the expectations of the Department.

6.3 What are the emerging issues that need to be addressed with the regard to local Indigenous workforce development in those communities?

A number of issues arise from the findings of the evaluation that should be addressed in relation to workforce development. These include:

- The need for closer supervision and professional support of workers in communities;
- The need for additional training, mentoring and professional development;
- Greater clarity around role definition; and

- Additional infrastructure requirements (computers with Internet access) and access to transport.

At the time of writing this report, supervision was stretched so that realistically support was only available on a once a month basis for some communities. This is clearly inadequate and there is as a result, a serious risk that the existing workforce will quickly turnover and find other opportunities for work. There is also a strong possibility that if a serious incident occurs at a Safe Place, such as an injury to a worker, criticism would be directed to the amount of support and oversight provided to workers in these high risk positions.

Alternatively, there is a risk for the Department, that people without appropriate qualifications and adequate English language, literacy and numeracy are given responsibility for outcomes that are unachievable. At a very basic level, a skills audit and training needs analysis should be undertaken for all existing and new staff entering employment. This audit should address:

- English language literacy and numeracy skills;
- Verbal and written communication skills;
- Occupational health and safety skills;
- Financial management skills;
- Information and communication technology skills;
- Knowledge of legal obligations relating to Safe Places (such as mandatory reporting, child protection); and
- Awareness of services and resources available within and outside their community.

From this audit a detailed training plan should be drawn up that progressively addresses the work skills of the employee.

On the other hand, it is also important for senior staff to recognise and utilise the local knowledge skills that individuals bring to their role, particularly in cases where the workers have been providing shelter for local family violence victims over a period of years. Models that encourage two-way learning should be encouraged and supported.

6.4 To what extent are service and service linkage, data and evidence gaps being filled (or not) by Safe Places?

In some ways it is really too early to say to what extent service linkage, data and evidence gaps are being filled by Safe Places. The short and blunt answer is that currently they are *not* filling these gaps. However, there are signs that linkages are being made. For example, the evaluation team observed examples of how service providers were being brought together for networking meetings at Safe Places (most notably at Nguu). These tentative linkages may ultimately serve to bridge service delivery gaps and promote more effective and better coordinated services within communities.

However, we believe it is unrealistic to expect Safe Place workers to make the connections and be held accountable for improving service coordination. This should be done with the support of supervisors who would work closely with Safe Place workers in communities to make the necessary connections. The evaluation team noted that external agencies (such as Police, GBMs, and Night Patrols) were generally supportive of Safe Places. However, these agencies were also concerned about the apparent lack of policies and procedures or agreed ways of working together. In some cases it may mean that MoUs need to be established. In other cases, a less formal working agreement may need to be established so that roles and responsibilities are clearly delineated. For example, when the evaluation team visited

Lajamanu, the police indicated their strong support for the Safe Place but also expressed a degree of frustration about not knowing who to contact, not having mobile phone numbers and not being aware of who was rostered on when.

At this point in time there is little evidence to suggest that data and evidence gaps are being filled by Safe Places. The documentation and reporting provided to the evaluation team are scant in detail and we do not believe that the data provided reflect accurately either the activities or the outcomes of the Safe Places. Steps to overcome this are suggested below. That said, the Safe Places *do* provide an important opportunity to address the evidence gaps and we acknowledge the strong potential for good evidence and data to be collected through the Safe Places initiative.

6.5 *How effective are, and what changes should be made to, data collection tools and processes?*

The small number of data collection tools and documentation returned to the evaluation team for analysis is of some concern. If, as the 19 recorded intakes may suggest, the level of activity in Safe Places is so low, questions would naturally be raised about the value of such facilities in remote communities. Alternatively, the small number of completed forms may reflect a number of other things:

- Lack of supervision to ensure that forms are filled in;
- A level of complexity beyond the abilities of workers;
- A lack of training in how to fill in the forms;
- The activity takes place outside the Safe Places and is therefore not recorded as Safe Place activity;
- Inadequate collation processes in place to collect and manage the information;
- The presence of a Safe Place within the community (and perhaps other developments such as new police stations or alcohol restrictions) is helping to reduce actual levels of violence (and this is then why it is not being used);
- A disjuncture between the envisaged function of the Safe Places and the current reality (forms do not capture what is happening).

Most likely, the reality is that the reason for so few forms being collected is a combination of the above. The evidence collected by the evaluation team suggests a lot more activity than 19 intakes. The assumption embedded in the recording forms is that clients will be taken in and provided accommodation or some other service. This assumption is reflected in the minimum data set (see Documentation and monitoring, page 43).

There is no evidence of safety plans or case management taking place (at least according to the data captured). However, as noted earlier (see Section 6.2, page 45) the forms as they are at the moment, constrain workers into recording a limited range of activities that are designed around mitigating the impact of violence or some other antisocial behaviour. If, as may be the case, the workers are performing a broader role in promoting safety, community harmony, health and well-being and raising awareness about positive lifestyle changes, then opportunity must be given for those things to be captured.

7 Recommendations and conclusions

A range of recommendations are outlined below. They are arranged for simplicity under the headings noted in Section 5.3.6, page 42. A brief description of the situation follows each recommendation.

7.1 Resourcing and timeline

Recommendation 1: It is recommended that resources are immediately provided to recruit project officer/coordination staff (particularly men and where possible Indigenous people) to establish a structure for visiting and supporting Safe Place community workers along the lines of that which has been developed for RAFCWs.

While the three year *Implementation Plan for the Family Package* provides overarching surety for the program in the near future a number of points need to be made to provide stability to the Safe Place operations in the near term. Included in this is the ongoing need for the strong support of community workers by the visiting project officers. The continued development of trust between community worker and project officers to ensure the program can be owned by Indigenous people will require a way of working consistent with well developed community development principles (see Section 5.3.5, page 37) and Recommendation 9, below).

Recommendation 2: In line with Recommendations 7, 8 and 9 below, it is recommended that resources be provided to ensure the planned audit, training, mentoring and support functions are carried out as soon as possible.

Recommendation 3: In line with Recommendations 4, 5 and 6 below, it is recommended that resources be provided to ensure the review of hub function activities with commensurate training and funding allocations.

7.2 Hub development

Recommendation 4: It is recommended that the concept of the Safe Places being a 'Hub' of activities be accepted.

In line with this it is suggested that the skills and activities required to carry out this adult education/broker role be enunciated so that adequate training and resources can be applied to this role. It is apparent that the concept of Safe Places as 'Hubs' of activities, including learning, cultural and networking activities, is essential to the eventual evolution of Safe Places to centres that can not only assuage current family violence issues, but attack underlying issues. Such activities also encourage strong community ownership and direction and allow communities their own particular 'style' of development.

Recommendation 5: It is recommended that the role of developing relationships to support both hub and primary activities include the development of onsite MoUs with primary agencies such as Police, Night Patrols/Shires and Health Centres.

Without strong connections to the three agencies named in this recommendation the job of the Safe Places becomes very difficult. While it is recognised that the relationships will have to be achieved at the community level, this may need to be supported from the Northern Territory Government/Australian Government level.

Recommendation 6: It is recommended that resources are engaged for the purposes of supporting Men's Places to:

- a. Provide adequate project officer staff as noted in Recommendation 1 to support Men's Places;
- b. Develop a structured plan for Men's Places that incorporates hub and education activities so that they may also be seen as places where men can go for a variety of reasons concerning their and the community's well-being; and
- c. Establish a pool of funding to be made available to each Men's Place to carry out such well-being or hub activities.

At present Men's Places are not receiving the attention that Women's Places are—this is particularly evident in the lack of project officers to support, train and monitor Men's Places. A perception that Men's Places are not receiving similar or adequate attention may grow and impair the ability of Men's Places to engage with their communities.

7.3 Training and support

Recommendation 7: It is recommended that an audit is undertaken of community workers skills and that such audit not only reviews western qualifications and skills, but also the Indigenous cultural knowledge and skills that the workers potentially bring to the role.

It is important that the community worker role is established around both Indigenous and non-Indigenous sets of skills and understandings. The process of gathering and supporting an integrated (Indigenous/western) set of skills and values will also act to indicate to Indigenous community members that the program indeed intends to become embedded in the community.

Recommendation 8: It is recommended that the steps currently under consideration by NTFC (Training and support, page 39), including the reintroduction of a mentoring scheme, certificate training and communication plan (between community workers and project officers), be applied as soon as possible.

At this point adequate training and support, including supporting community worker initiatives, are at a crucial point. Some of the initial enthusiasm and the direction of a negotiated purpose have been lost. It cannot be stated strongly enough that the 'front end' loading (in this instance for training and support) is vital in the development of in community provision. Workers need to be better supported in documenting what they are doing - much of it likely to be 'invisible' - and also in having ways that they can track progress and the impact of their work with clients/families. It is important to regain perceived 'lost ground' here. In terms of a communication plan, note should be made of the RAFCW response to this issue.

Recommendation 9: It is recommended that project officers also be audited in terms of their skill sets and that these are viewed across the necessary skills required of project officers to adequately carry out their role.

It is not necessary that every project officer has all sets of skills required, including training, negotiating and community development skills. However it is important that each team has strengths that cover the purposes of the visiting teams.

7.4 Employment

Recommendation 10: It is recommended that the issue of employing community workers as casual part time workers be held under review.

Some of the issues of recruitment and employment may move to an NGO, Shire, or NGO/Shire agency over the next 12 months. This may both provide additional flexibility and the opportunity to review the nature of employment in the program.

7.5 Mediating risk

Recommendation 11: It is recommended that the current legislation concerning mandatory reporting is included in current training.

Recommendation 12: It is recommended that a set of principles of safe practice be established and that project officers and community workers are trained and audited in these measures.

Recommendation 13: It is recommended that community workers have access to a mobile communication device for their safety (telephone or two way radio).

Recommendation 14 It is recommended that community workers have access to a vehicle so that they might carry out all aspects of their role.

There are a number of risks to workers at various levels of the organisation of Safe Places. It is import that, as far as possible, NTFC ameliorates such risk. Recommendations 11 to 14 reflect areas of concern as they affect NTFC Safe Place community workers.

Recommendation 15: It is recommended that a plan for project officer visits be developed and that it is reviewed to ensure that health and safety issues have been taken into account.

There are also concerns for the safety of visiting project officers in terms of vehicle travel over long distances. This can be exacerbated when their visiting schedules are hectic and they become tired. There is also a health risk in terms of stress disorders from the combination of travel, time away from home and work pressures.

7.6 Documentation and monitoring

Recommendation 16 It is recommended that data capture forms be updated to take into account the emerging and broader role of workers in supporting family and community well-being.

Forms need to be simplified further and existing expectations of case management and other more detailed information about Safe Place stays, should be regarded as unrealistic for the time being, although it is important that critical information continue to be captured until new forms have been finalised.

Recommendation 17 It is recommended that a formative evaluation framework be built around the Safe Places model to ensure that learnings from the work being carried out are acted on and so that improvements can be made to the model.

While, for the purposes of interim reporting purposes, the current evaluation has had its use in documenting progress and outcomes to date, it does little over the long term to shape the operational development of the program. An evaluation framework should be developed cooperatively with a range of stakeholders, including those with a direct interest in the communities where Safe Places are located.

Recommendation 18 Following on from Recommendation 17, it is recommended that an evaluation framework be built around a program logic model that clearly articulates the activities and anticipated outcomes of Safe Places over at least the short and medium term.

A program logic workshop (or something similar) should target not only senior staff, but in some way capture the ideas and aspirations of community members (including workers).

While program logic is not without its pitfalls, used in conjunction with a continuous improvement process and a formative evaluation (as suggested in Recommendation 17), it would provide a valuable point of reference for the ongoing development of—and subsequent assessment of—the Safe Places initiative. Further, the logic model will provide clarity around the intent of the program in terms of its activities and expected outcomes. This does not mean that changes, where necessary, cannot be made to the program (or the logic model assumptions) but it does mean that the starting point for evaluation and development purposes, is clearly articulated.

Recommendation 19 It is recommended that within the Safe Places team an individual be identified who collates, analyses, reports and responds to data collected from Safe Places workers in communities.

Statistics should be reported on a monthly basis back to the Safe Places management. Issues or alerts raised on forms should be identified and responded to as soon as practical.

7.7 The future

Recommendation 20: It is recommended that possible models of Northern Territory Government relationship to NGO/Shire operations be developed so as the role of the Northern Territory Government can be clarified which in turn will allow more effective planning around issues such as staffing and professional development training.

While the move to transfer operational day-to-day control of Safe Places to other agencies may be an exciting one, it is also one fraught with challenges. Included in these challenges are the uncertainties such a change will create and the need to find a way for the Northern Territory Government to maintain trusting relationships with the Safe Places while allowing the new entities to build their trust and support.

Recommendation 21: It is recommended that there is a review of Indigenous governance of the project in line with operations moving to a new operations approach.

Due to a variety of factors it would seem that the initial negotiated position for Safe Places as places where control would return to the community has been eroded. There is now the perception of a top down model in place. This situation requires reviewing and rectifying to ensure Indigenous community uptake and ownership of the Safe Places.

Recommendation 22: It is recommended that better communications and monitoring technology and processes such as computers and access to other sites through internet connection be investigated and costed with a view to implementing over the next 12 months.

As Safe Places continue to develop it is important that they get the appropriate tools and training to carry out their roles efficiently and effectively.

7.8 Conclusions

Some general statements can be made around the Safe Places program. Emerging from the NTER into a world of other changes and issues in remote area Indigenous communities was always going to make this a challenging program to see to fruition. Pressure, particularly initially, to meet timelines within uncertain budget outcomes also added to the stress on the program. Further, the issue of VOCs also created a major disruption to the progress being made in communities and created lost momentum as potential workers who had shown strong interest could not be employed (budget uncertainty) and so lost interest. Such disruptions also impacted on the processes and moral of visiting staff.

In hindsight it was noted that there was some misplaced optimism in terms of the speed at which community consultation could take place. As one participant said, *you've really got to be moderated in the tempo around the community consultation process*. In other words, and this intention was strongly held across those interviewed, if you are going to embed this program in the community and have 'real' community ownership, the process needed to be flexible and flow at the individual communities' rate. There is little evidence to suggest at this point (although it is early days for most community Safe Places) that communities are 'owning' their Safe Places.

If we place the events around the on ground visiting, training and support then the current set of challenges stand out clearly. However, it is apparent that management is aware of many of the issues and is moving to redress them. There does, however, remain a question concerning where the tipping point is for each Safe Place in terms of losing credibility and enthusiasm and managing risk. This makes it urgent that providing resources to the areas of auditing, training and supporting Safe Places cannot be delayed.

It also needs to be restated (see Section 6.1) that there are quite a number of positives that have emerged in the development of Safe Places to-date. These include, for example, a strong will in communities to tackle the problem of Indigenous family violence, many committed community workers, and now funding security over the next three years for the program. Hopefully planning and development can now move to rectify some of the issues that have evolved.

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