



University of  
South Australia

**Northern Adelaide  
Medicare Local**

**Working from the  
Strength of Connection:**

**Responding to Family Violence in the  
Northern Adelaide Medicare Local region**

# Introduction

- NAML: Improving Safety and Wellbeing of Women and Children.
- Research Team – Sarah Wendt, Deirdre Tedmanson, Nicole Moulding, Fiona Buchanan, Alison Elder (UniSA), Melanie Attard (NAML).
- Human Research Ethics Committee at UniSA and the South Australian Aboriginal Health Research Ethics Committee (Aboriginal Health Council - AHCSA).

# Purpose of the project

- Scope the Australian policy and service context that surrounds responding to family violence for Aboriginal communities.
- Scoping of local services and consultations with key stakeholders in the NAML region to identify recommendations for improved service outcomes and program development in the area of family violence.

# Commissioning the Research

- Creating a framework for ethical research practice
- Endorsement of the preferred tenderer
- A ‘research and consultation’ project
- Ethics approval from two committees
- Project deliverable dates contingent on receipt of “appropriate ethics approval”

# Contract – performance criteria

“Ensure every effort is taken to conduct the project in a culturally-competent and sensitive way, working in a spirit of partnership and collaboration with NAML staff and the Aboriginal Elders engaged to provide advice on the project.”

“Criteria for assessment [of the project report] will include...that the endorsement of the report by the Aboriginal Elders engaged to provide advice on the project is sought.”

# Consultations

- 20 Aboriginal women, 3 Aboriginal men, and 5 non-Aboriginal women representing a range of services that worked directly with family violence.
- Consultations ranged from 45minutes – 2 .5 hours. Hand written notes.
- Snowballing.

# Themes discussed...

1. Understanding family violence.
2. Key barriers to family violence programs.
3. Understanding cultural safety.
4. Supporting Aboriginal Liaison Officers.

# Understanding FV...colonisation & dispossession

*“there is still a lot of ‘unwell’ that has travelled through family lines.”*

*“The area of Aboriginal family violence feels heavy and there is acknowledgment that this comes from history...how is this ever going to change so Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people don’t have to continue to carry the ‘bag of rocks’ that represents our past.”*



# Understanding FV...Gender

*“we need to encourage and name respect amongst Aboriginal people but in a culturally sensitive way, for example, Aboriginal men need Aboriginal men who are role models and live free of violence to help show alternative ways of living.”*

*“Aboriginal women and family want to stand by their men”.*

# Understanding FV...lateral violence

- *“Aboriginal men take their pain out on Aboriginal women and vice versa”.*
- *“Aboriginal people are scared to challenge each other about this and to step in and say this is not ok because they then open themselves to abuse and blame culture.”*
- *“Aboriginal people turn on themselves” ....“ you think you are better than us” ...“you think you are flash now”.*

# Key barriers to FV services

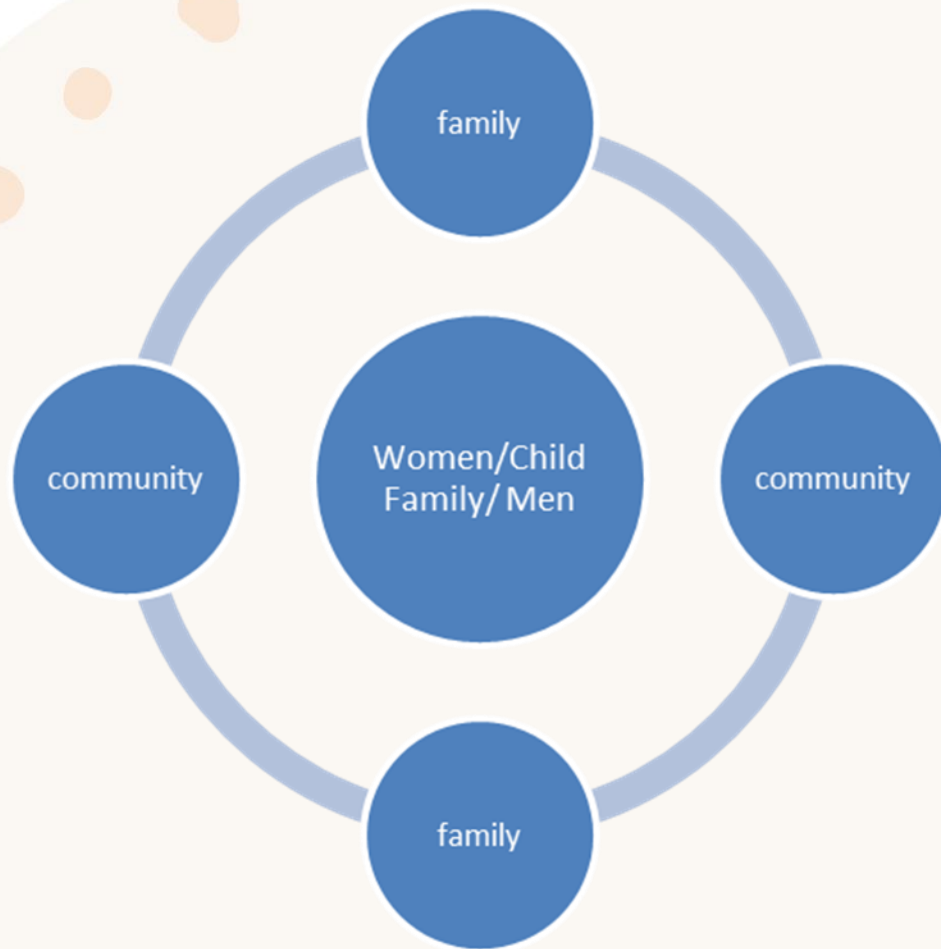
- Shame
- Overwhelmed by survival
- Payback and blame
- Not culturally safe
- Tokenism
- Trust
- Frustration
- Language

*“The energy required navigating and dealing with the stress is often hard for Aboriginal women and men to face.”*

*“Aboriginal people are exceptionally good at reading people and agencies and if they sense negativity towards them, or tokenism, they will turn away from help. “*

# Understanding cultural safety

- *“Aboriginal people want to stand by each other.”... “Aboriginal people always stick together and look after each other”.*
- *“We need to work on our business our way”*
- *“Creating a safe place will allow Aboriginal people to meet, talk, share, teach and feel belonging.”*



NAML - Working from the Strength of Connection

# Supporting Aboriginal Liaison Officers

How to balance natural leadership that is useful in Aboriginal family contexts with roles in employment is difficult. The divide between work and family is not stark like in non-Aboriginal contexts. ALOs absorb much in their work that is emotional and demanding and hence it is vital to help them remain in their work in safe ways.

# Recommendations

1. The foundations for family violence work – building cultural safety.
2. The principles of family violence work.
3. Family violence program development and support in the northern region.

# Follow on...

- NAML.
- Gave it to AHCSA.
- Northern Domestic Violence Service.
- KWY (invited to speak here).
- Social Development Committee of SA Parliament.
- ANROWS (Australian National Research Organisation for Women's Safety).