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ANROWS acknowledges the traditional owners of the land across Australia on which we work and live. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders past, present and future; and we value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture and knowledge.

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Advocacy for safety and empowerment: State of knowledge paper

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This work is part of the ANROWS Landscapes series. ANROWS Landscapes (State of knowledge papers) are medium length papers that scope current knowledge on an issue related to violence against women and their children. Papers will draw on empirical research, including research produced under ANROWS's research program, and/or practice knowledge.

This report addresses work covered in ANROWS research project 3.3 "*Advocacy for safety and empowerment*". Please consult the ANROWS website for more information on this project. In addition to this paper, an ANROWS Horizons and ANROWS Compass will be available at a later stage as part of this project.

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Introduction

There are numerous challenges in presenting critical, policy, service and research literature – with its many strands - on responses to Aboriginal women experiencing family and domestic violence in Australia. This review primarily considers literature relevant to service responses within the context of these debates and discussions. In doing so it focuses on responses to Aboriginal women as victims/survivors of family and domestic violence from non-legal and non-clinical services[1] and those delivered by women's specialist services. It also focuses on service delivery in regional and remote settings. The review further profiles research that amplifies the voices of Aboriginal women. It goes on to consider the applicability, strengths and limitations of participatory research methods drawing on health, education and human development literature. The review is *critical* in that it highlights problems that underpin ideas of "effectiveness" and "success" that drive objectives in service delivery. It seeks to re-centre aspirations for *empowerment* alongside those for safety.

The research project that gives rise to this literature review, *Advocacy for Safety and Empowerment,* centres on service responses to and relations more generally between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women on issues of family and domestic violence. The research will be conducted at three sites: women's specialist services located in the tri-state Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara lands; Alice Springs in Central Australia; and the Australian Capital Territory. Therefore in the research and this review, the term Aboriginal (also used interchangeably here with Indigenous[2]) encompasses women in different geographic and social locations and who are diverse in language and heritage; but share identity as the original inhabitants, owners and custodians of Australia.[3]

Some assumptions underpinning the review (and also the research) include that Aboriginal women's experience, knowledge and perspective is not only to be found as a client group or receiver of services. Aboriginal women also comment as scholars, advocates, workers, policy makers and service providers as well as from their multiple and overlapping social, family and cultural roles. Similarly non-Aboriginal perspectives are not assumed to be homogenous or located in positions of authority. Furthermore women's specialist services are not anticipated to be primarily non-Indigenous or even mainstream. Although alive to all these complexities, this review nonetheless uses terms in categorical ways in order to more clearly articulate themes, debates and issues. While in this review we maintain a critically reflexive stance and openness to these multiple ways of knowing, we nonetheless acknowledge the probability of our failure to do so adequately.

A core motivation for the research project, *Advocacy for Safety and Empowerment,* is the opportunity to look again at relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous women on the issue of family and domestic violence (Howe, 2009; Watson & Heath, 2004). The project asks what has been learned about these relations over the past 30 or so years. It particularly asks how Aboriginal women have influenced service evolution and adaption, and how this influence might be further strengthened and centralised. The project seeks to re-examine practices and ideas at the site of women's specialist services interaction. Part I of this review centralises critical writing, analysis and representation by Aboriginal women. Part II considers literature examining the evolution of responses to Aboriginal women experiencing family and domestic violence, and sets it alongside an overview of developments in approaches to Indigenous service delivery from governments. It concludes that the state of knowledge (as assessments of "what works") on non-legal and non-clinical service responses to Aboriginal women as victims/survivors of family and domestic violence is exceedingly thin. Part III brings the critical literature to bear on participatory approaches. It considers the ways in which a participatory ethos may further open the ground and methods on which Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women debate ideas and approaches that challenge violence and seek to enable Aboriginal women to live violence-free.

1 That is, services that are not established exclusively or primarily for legal advice, assistance and representation, and which are not established exclusively or primarily to deliver individualised clinical or therapeutic treatment. Which is not to say that many if not all family and domestic violence services have not developed knowledge and experience in these areas.

2 However, we do not look into scholarly work and commentary from Torres Strait Islander women.

3 Similarly the term non-Aboriginal women glosses diversity in ethnicity and socio-economic background.

Part one: Debates and contestations

Critical Aboriginal perspectives

For this review it was tempting to commence with academic literature that looks at political and social issues through a post-colonial lens and informed by critical race theory;[4] as well as to histories of women's organising and the many feminisms agitating across Australia (Maddison & Sawer, 2004; Curthoys, 1996). These emphasise different configurations of the problem of the state as a colonial, patriarchal and homogenising enterprise. Yet critical commentary from Aboriginal women on family and domestic violence, its meanings and urgencies, are at once more multi-layered, profound and grounded than these works. Their critiques place not just the state under scrutiny, but also the women's movement against domestic violence.

Aboriginal women's engagements with, and appraisals of, dominant Anglo Australian positioning on family and domestic violence encompass a number of criss-crossing strands. One involves Aboriginal women issuing clarion calls that violence against women is a problem in Aboriginal communities. Pam Greer (1989) and Bess Nungarrayi Price (2009) write at opposite ends of twenty plus years of active campaigning and from different geographic locations. However, there is similarity in their concern to break the silence surrounding physical and sexual violence and their frustrations with poor responses to Aboriginal women from a variety of agencies. Aboriginal workers in regional New South Wales (NSW) and central Northern Territory speak of their struggles finding safe places, the demands on them of constant advocacy and "the problem with vast distances and isolation" (Greer, 1989, p. 20). Aboriginal activists and researchers further argue for a wider lens on the nature and extent of violence and abuse experienced by women. In many situations lives are said to be "full of violence" (Price, 2009, p. 149), and deeply compromised across the spiritual as well as material and physical realms (Purdie, Dudgeon & Walker, 2010; Robertson, 1999). Such is the spread and depth of the violence that Aboriginal scholars worry about the "language of minimisation"[5] and note the need to guard against seeing violence as "a normal and ordinary part of life" for Aboriginal women, men and children (O'Donoghue, 2001, p. 15; Best & Lucashenko, 1995).[6]

This clear eyed depiction joins another strong element to Aboriginal women's critical commentary. Writers sharply question the theorising of feminism – in particular radical feminism - about the causes of violence against women that was dominant in the 1970s and 1980s in Australia. As Bennett (1997) discusses, patriarchy does not fully explain violence against Aboriginal women, as theirs was not a "purely gendered" (p. 11) experience, nor only Black on Black violence (Behrendt 1993). Early feminism's effort to pin violence to patriarchy, the ascription of violence to a private sphere, and the tendency to separate intimate partner violence from other forms of violence, including other forms of violence against women, has been censured as a limiting representation of Aboriginal women's lived experiences (Smallacombe, 2004).

A more complicated picture

Many Aboriginal activists and scholars rejected the essentialism of gender as the dominant analytic through which to understand men's violence. Instead, they situated men's violence within a colonial history of dispossession in which "we were stripped of culture, family, language and dignity" (Smith & Williams, 1992, p. 7; Sam, 1992). Writing from a deep understanding of the trauma carried across generations by all Aboriginal people, Atkinson and Woods (2000) write that the "violence of colonisation" is layered with the "violence of racism" and "the violence of misogyny" (p. 5). This living legacy has woven violence and its after effects into the fabric of Aboriginal lives (Atkinson, 2002). The analysis goes further to condemn feminism's failure "to see the pervading effect that racial oppression has on black men and women" (Behrendt, 1993, p. 32). As Huggins argues, feminism's claim of an essential bond between all women obscures "white racial imperialism" and overshadows the

4 For non-Australian overviews of these theoretical approaches see (for example) Childs, P. and Williams, P. (2013, 1997). *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory*. New York; Routledge; Delgardo, R. and Stefancic, J. (2012) *Critical Race Theory: an introduction*. 2nd edition. New York: New York University Press, and Crenshaw, K. et al. (1995). *Critical Race Theory: The key writings that formed the movement*. New York: The New Press.

5 Cripps 2004 quoted in Cripps, Indigenous Family Violence: pathways forward. In, Purdie, et al (2010, p. 146).

6 O"Donoghue, L., "Indigenous Violence: it's everyone's business", *The Age*, 22 October 2001, p.15.

many ways in which white women participated in and benefited from colonisation, protectionism and assimilation (Huggins, 1987, p. 4; Behrendt, 1993). Disentangling connections between the sources and structures of power in Aboriginal women's lives is not only illogical but ultimately impossible. Contemplating the many faces of power and violence Lucashenko argues these "are very closely bound" (1996, p. 389).

Aboriginal scholars expand these critiques by pointing to the myriad of ways in which feminists' "white privilege" works to place Aboriginal women as "Other" and to cloud representations of *all* women experiencing violence as a white women's normal. This blindness is argued to be located within an omnipresent "past and present" in which the "unearned assets"[7] of whiteness are unacknowledged, and within dominant unspoken conventions about "control and ownership of knowledge" (Moreton-Robinson, 2011, p. 67, 71). From this stance, feminism is not liberating but "part of that colonising force" which perpetuates misrepresentation and facilitates fragmentation between Aboriginal women and within Aboriginal communities (Huggins et al., 1991, p. 506). Many white feminist and bureaucratic depictions of Aboriginal women both assumed uniformity of place, experience and identity, and drew on signifiers and stereotypes of "authenticity" and difference (Moreton-Robinson, 2011).[8] Instead, the "rich abundance" of stories from and by Aboriginal women demanded attention (Behrendt, 1993, p. 42). The invitation from Aboriginal women to white women for critical self-evaluation of their power and access to resources *as* white women is connected to Aboriginal women's firm positions on self-definition and self-representation.

Aboriginal women and "culture"

Joining these critical perspectives has been writers' concerns that the voices of Aboriginal women victimised by violence (in all its layered and complex forms) be given greater space. These are the voices that Smallacombe says are "habitually silenced" (2004, p. 47). Scholars from Lucashenko to Moreton-Robinson have written across a near twenty year period to express disquiet about this "silencing" (Lucashenko 1996, p. 387; Moreton-Robinson, 2011, p. 77). Indeed, as Lucashenko writes both feminist and Aboriginal rights movements create a "double warp between race and gender" into which Aboriginal women "disappear" and where "explicit examination of power relations within the Black community" slips from view (Lucashenko, 1996, p. 379, 1994). What is left is "a kind of visual and intellectual pornography" of Aboriginal dysfunction and despair where "the most vulnerable are absent" (Langton, 2008a, p. 145; 2008b, p. 26).

Aboriginal women have also been critical of the ways silencing occurs when violence is cloaked as culturally sanctioned in some manner (Atkinson, 1990).[9] Payne, for example, famously decried "bullshit traditional law" as distorting perceptions of and justifying non-interference in violence against Aboriginal women (Payne, 1992; Lucashenko, 1996). Others have been critical of the manner in which racist and sexist structures such as in law enforcement and adversarial criminal justice more generally have drawn upon particular and narrow ideas of "culture" to degrade and demoralise Aboriginal women seeking protection and justice (Atkinson, 1990; Cripps, 2011; Davis, 2011; Kelly, 1999). Moreover, arguing (re)connection with revitalised, as well as re-imagined, culture and local governance as a means of protecting Aboriginal women, men and children does not obviate the need for "the community … to see and hear what it is doing to itself"(Atkinson, 1990, p. 5).

The continuing question about the use and misuse of "culture" has been extended more recently by Aboriginal scholars. Drawing from political aspirations for self-determination and sovereignty, Davis calls for greater specification to how Aboriginal groups manage internally "issues of women's rights and the right of children to be safe" (Davis, 2012, pp. 80-81). She argues that differentiation of capabilities and interests between and amongst Indigenous women, men and children invites re-consideration of the distribution of resources, power and authority internal to Aboriginal communities. Here the ideal of self-determination is envisaged not solely as collective and not only about a relationship with the settler state; but is also about "intra-nation" building where individuals (as well as families and groups) can enjoy freedom "to work, to be healthy, to read, to care, to love, to be well fed or to have shelter" (Davis, 2012, p. 83). This work brings forward concrete hopes – "practical language" (Davis, 2012, p. 85) - for substantive and material benefit nested within the political goals.

7 The "invisible package of unearned assets" described by Peggy McIntosh is used by Aileen Moreton-Robinson to ground understanding white race privilege (Moreton-Robinson, 2011, p. 202).

8 Michael Dodson writes about also resisting Aboriginal identities and cultures being "fixed". Self-definition, he says, declines confinement in "fixed, unchangeable and necessary characteristics, and refuses to allow for transformation and variation" (Dodson, M. (2003). "The end in the beginning: re(de)finding Aboriginality", p.39, in M. Grossman (ed). Blacklines: contemporary critical writing by Indigenous Australians. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, pp. 25-42).

9 See also commentary from the NPY Women's Council documented by Lloyd (2004).

Critical engagements for and with change

Along with calls for more nuanced, engaged and sustained interactions with Aboriginal women, families and communities (Carney, 2004; Cox et al., 2009), these challenges have opened ground for Aboriginal writers and researchers to document diversity between and complexities to Aboriginal women's lives. As an example, Cripps and her colleagues document some services in Victoria saying that Aboriginal women with a disability are "too hard to handle" (Cripps, Miller & Saxton-Barney 2010, p. 3). The vision for a "dignified human life" for Aboriginal women (indeed any woman) needs to account for individual as well as communal contexts (Davis, 2012, p. 85). In essence, these writers suggest that, if Aboriginal women are not "just" women, they are also not "only" Aboriginal. The reflection implies careful analysis of assumptions underpinning services and responses for Aboriginal women experiencing family and domestic violence.

These contemporary discussions echo older commentary. Greer's consultations with Aboriginal communities in regional NSW in the late 1980s revealed considerable, largely unseen, community activity responding to family and domestic violence (Greer, 1989). A point reiterated in recent times (Wirringa Baiya Aboriginal Women's Legal Centre, 2011, p. 26). Similar activity was described in work of Aboriginal children's services in Victoria (Ardler, 1990), and as part of Aboriginal policy consultations in Queensland at the end of the century (Robertson, 1999). Taken together, these studies considered the complex reality of the lives of Aboriginal women. They identified a range of barriers to help-seeking including feelings of torn loyalties, shame, fear of reprisals from the perpetrator as well as from family, fear of ostracism, distrust of authorities, the experience and expectation of racist and stereotypical responses, and victim blaming. They also noted inadequate services, few realistic and sustainable options, services that presented a dominant model inappropriate for many Aboriginal women, and insufficient involvement of Aboriginal women in designing ways forward.

Seeking change on many levels

In the last 10-15 years Aboriginal women have persisted with critiques of:

- both over and under-policing of Aboriginal communities (Smallacombe, 2004);
- racialised sexual stereotypes that hindered access to justice (McGlade, 2010); and
- sparse, fragmented services in regional and remote areas (Adams & Hunter, 2007; Medland, 2007).

Furthermore, advocates and scholars have argued for more flexible service models (Slann, 2010) to articulate differential experiences of Aboriginal women (for example, with regard to levels of disability, recency of dispossession, and geographic location) that is not divisive (Cripps et al., 2010; Davis, 2011). At the same time, concern for "cultural safety" for Aboriginal women within non-Aboriginal services and sectors continues to dominate in many parts of Australia (Cripps & Miller, 2010, p. 11), as well as an ongoing argument for the need to have general human rights informed responses *plus* special measures (Burchfield & Braybrook, 2009; McGlade, 2012). Of abiding interest to academics and advocates has been ensuring demonstrable respect in interactions between Aboriginal people and both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal service providers (Scott et al., 2004). These discussions about services recognise that manifestations of respect for Aboriginal women are possible when workers have a multifaceted skill set.

Demands by Aboriginal women for community ownership of the problems of family violence, as well as the solutions to it, have been constant. In addition, there have been ongoing calls for holistic and healing support for these communities (McGlade, 2007; NATSIWA, 2014; PADV, 2003; Robertson, 1999; Sam, 1992). Aboriginal women and men have developed and managed a wide range of responses including safe houses, shelters, legal advice and assistance, night patrols, health and wellbeing services and family support (Adams & Hunter, 2007; Blagg & Valuri, 2003; Gilmore, 2013; Karahasan, 2014; NPYWC, 2008; Sam, 1992). More recent developments in collaborative frameworks to family and domestic violence responses have attracted Aboriginal criticism for over-reliance on justice-based and intrusive measures (Cox et al., 2009), with critics demanding deeper and longer term attention to inclusion, partnership and power sharing (Cripps et al., 2010; Gordon et al., 2002; Lucashenko & Kilroy, 2005; Nickson et al., 2011; Social Justice Commissioner, 2006; Wild & Anderson, 2007). Deeper still is the acknowledgement of the continued authority and stature of Aboriginal women and their capacities to sustain their laws, rituals and responsibilities, and the ways in which these strengths are drawn upon not only to resist violence but to empower women within families and communities (Watson, 2007).[10]

Yet Aboriginal advocates have noted fatigue with the many enquiries, frustration with lack of progress and disconnect between aspiration and delivery of responses to Aboriginal

10 For example, the Balgo Women's Law Camp is a highly regarded initiative of the Kapululangu Women's Law and Culture Centre to continue to grow Law and make children strong. See http://www.kapululangu.org/

women (Alford & Croucher, 2011; Cripps & Miller, 2010; Whetnall & Payne, 2011). Over the last two decades there have been substantive government and sector reviews in a number of jurisdictions that have considered family and domestic violence. At least seven of these reviews have been Indigenous-specific and four have additionally considered child abuse and other forms of community violence (ALRC/NSWLRC, 2010; Gordon et al., 2002; Memmott et al., 2001; Mulligan, 2008; National Council, 2009; NSW Aboriginal Child Sexual Assault Taskforce, 2006; PADV, 2003; Robertson, 1999; Victims of Crime Coordinator, 2009; Wild & Anderson, 2007). Therefore, implementation of report recommendations and sustained responsiveness emerge as critical to achieving safety for Aboriginal women.

Over the period of time in which these reviews have been conducted, however, Aboriginal women have also celebrated achievements in self-directed and self-managed services (Cripps & Davis, 2012; Gilmore, 2013; Wirringa Baiya Aboriginal Women's Legal Centre, 2011). They have sharpened their criticism of some male dominated Aboriginal services as serving narrow interests (Davis, 2011; Langton, 2008b; Price, 2009) and maintained a critical eye on the regulatory control the state continues to impose on Aboriginal women's lives (Watson, 2011). Indigenous attention to the issues of family and domestic violence and the surrounding debates and challenges in responding are long standing, deep and sustained.

The next section briefly considers literature depicting the wide landscape of non-legal and non-clinical service responses[11] to family and domestic violence with an eye to these critiques made by Aboriginal women. In considering this layer of services, the section will draw attention to research and evaluation of initiatives that have attempted to respond, the ways in which problems continue, and will attend to the shift from social movement and community-based leadership to top-down governmental direction and its implications.

Change agents? Women's movements, women's sectors

In Australia and other countries, the 1960s and 1970s witnessed far-reaching social and political movements against colonialism and poverty, and for civil rights and women's liberation (to name a few). There is broad agreement in Australia, as in many other countries, that family and domestic violence (and violence against women and girls more generally) was brought to public attention by the many women's movements.[12] While numerous points of inequality, discrimination and oppression have been raised and challenged in a variety of ways by women in social movements, in political parties, within and against established public and private institutions, and across sectors from law and health to business and literature, for example, the movements have been a broad church of much heated debate and disagreement over many decades (Curthoys, 1996). Indeed, in her history of the women's refuge movement in Victoria, Theobald observes that it "is not a seamless one of "feminist" success and ideas, but rather a story of complex relationships, ideologies, identities and power struggles" (Theobald, 2012, p. 10). However, a unifying and enduring legacy of feminism's approach to family and domestic violence has been attention to power in its many manifestations and as underpinning both oppression and empowerment.

While refuges are not the only innovations of activism, they became emblematic of the movement against family and domestic violence as practical resources within whose walls women could potentially seek rest, respite, recuperation and even emancipation.[13] Since the 1970s, they have played a key role in keeping women and children safe and helping them to restart their lives (Spinney, 2012). From these places emerged irrefutable proof that domestic violence existed, information about its long-lasting and wide effects on individuals and families, and clarity that – across race, class and ethnic differences – the main culprits were men. Refuges were also sites in which consciousness was raised, manifestos penned, protests organised and networks created. They came to symbolise women's movement separation from government and state agencies, and used this independence to mount trenchant attacks on the multiple failures of social welfare and justice systems to accept, understand and respond to the urgency of family and domestic violence. While never

11 We define non-legal and non-clinical service responses as those that are not established exclusively or primarily for legal advice, assistance and representation, and which are not established exclusively or primarily to deliver individualised clinical or therapeutic treatment. The definition does not exclude recognition that many if not all family and domestic violence services have developed knowledge and experience in these areas.

12 There are a number of seminal texts that focus on different countries. For the USA see Schecter (1982) and Shepherd (2005). For the UK see Dobash and Dobash (1992). In Australia, see (for example) Hopkins and McGregor (1991), Theobald (2012; 2013); Weeks (2004).

13 There are a number of localised histories of women's refuges in Australia. See, for example, Gatley and Groves (1987) reflecting on safe house options for Aboriginal women in Western Australia, Johnson (1983) in relation to a NSW refuge, Memmot et al. (2013) for a discussion of a safe house in the Northern Territory, and Theobald (2014) discussing issues for Victorian refuges.

envisaged as an end in themselves, refuges nonetheless came to represent different, often contradictory, social and political expectations for women whether Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal (McFerran, 2007; Murray, 2008). It was also from these sites that tributary movements flowed for women's health, for law reform across family, civil and criminal jurisdictions, and financial and educational measures to foster women's economic independence.

Yet it was this rallying emphasis on women's common experience, the ubiquity of patriarchy and on a universal vision that attracted contestation and debate. As set out in earlier sections, questioning and reproach of anglo-centric positions came from Aboriginal women and was amplified in critical commentary from immigrant women and women with disabilities (Han, 2009; Ghafournia, 2011; Murdolo, 1996). The internal practices of refuges – and other family and domestic violence services - as well as positions adopted in public political debates often failed to accommodate different truths or to address the myriad ways Aboriginal women were excluded as users and workers (Murdolo, 1996; Wilson, 1996). In addition, these perspectives queried the objective that women should leave violent men and necessarily seek lives independent of men. In contrast, Aboriginal women view their identities as connected to family and community (Wendt & Zannettino, 2015); connections that are sustaining as well as constraining in complicated ways. The assumption that women's liberation would necessarily place women from diverse communities and with complex needs in safer (or even better) places was examined, by Aboriginal women, particularly, and found deficient.

A diverse service landscape

Over the past twenty years the family and domestic violence service landscape has diversified considerably across Australia and in other countries. Some services are exclusive in their focus on women, family and domestic violence or Aboriginal women, and some overlap across these categories. Others are folded into general health or family services whether targeting the whole population or specific communities. Innovations in the services provided for women as victims/survivors have included:

- providing legal advice and assistance;
- organisations providing individual and system advocacy;
- help-lines, counselling or healing activities;
- peer mentoring and community development;
- transition housing; and
- training and education.

However, aside from descriptive information, there is little research or evaluation of these services in the public sphere.

Interwoven with the evolution of these services, practice and policy approaches have drawn heavily on intersectionality theory to respond to, and build upon, the myriad critical concerns delivered by Aboriginal women. Developed by African-American feminists, intersectionality explores "the various ways in which race and gender intersect in shaping structural, political, and representational aspects of violence against women of color" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 358). Rather than pose binary or hierarchical relationships, the theory poses a "matrix of domination" in which violence, inequalities, oppression and discrimination can be understood (Henne & Troshynski, 2013, p. 460). Attending to more than identity, intersectionality argues against unitary lens and turns instead to analysis and action on the meshing of systems of power in real lives.

Today the debates and dilemmas sketched in this part of the review have not been settled. These debates take place alongside, with, and sometimes separate to, "a culturally informed, politically charged critical community" of Aboriginal intellectuals, advocates and community members (Grossman 1999, p. 7). Appraising the various histories on domestic violence advocacy, some feminist scholars pose a "deflated movement" that has fractured and been co-opted by governments and funders (Lehrner & Allen, 2009). Others argue instead that there is a broad social movement that is in a constant state of invention and reinvention, learning and re-learning and one that is especially invigorated by intersectional campaigns by women of color, young women and queer women (Arnold & Ake, 2013; Harris, 2010). The likelihood of continuing contestation and disagreement is not an obstacle to social change; rather it is productive (Maddison & Partridge, 2014). In Australia, as elsewhere, there is a sense that "the political" embedded within responses to family and domestic violence is at least in part about the complexities arising from its connections with, and challenges to, communities in all their diversity as well as to state institutions (Humphreys & Joseph, 2004). What is shared across the various advocacy and scholarly activity on domestic violence is a recognition that these are political concerns about who and what is valued, how and in what ways. These concerns deeply connect with aspirations for freedom, self-determination, empowerment and the right to be safe.

The next part to this review considers the more fine-grained literature about Aboriginal women's help-seeking, their assessments of community and government services, and analysis from service providers. It then studies the wider frame of government agendas, and contextualises specific considerations.

Part two: The evolution of responses to Aboriginal women experiencing family and domestic violence

Help-seeking and access to services: Barriers, constraints and enablers

Much of the literature considering responses to Indigenous family and domestic violence pays selective attention to the critical debates articulated by Aboriginal women. A significant component is devoted to prevention and early intervention responses. Community education, community awareness, training and family services for Australian Aboriginal peoples has been extensively documented (PADV, 2003).[14] Similarly, a systematic review of research on family violence reduction programs in Canadian First Nations communities found studies that are offender-focused or that address the effects of violence on children (Shea et al., 2010). Our review does not argue against the focus on prevention; rather, it notices the absence of attention to Aboriginal women as adult victims.

Barriers to help-seeking

Another strand in the literature provides extensive documentation of the barriers Aboriginal women experience that weigh against accessing support especially from the formal services of health, child protection and justice. A recent national survey of 111 domestic violence services identified barriers shared by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women especially housing, service shortages, unsympathetic community attitudes and the damage violence wrecks upon women's confidence and self-esteem.[15] The studies examining barriers particularly note that Aboriginal women distrust government services for a number of core reasons. These include fear that their children may be taken away and fear of what will happen to the perpetrator in custody (Adams & Hunter, 2007; Cunneen, 2009a; Kelly, 1999; Scott et al., 2004). These fears are grounded in historical and contemporary realities (Taylor et al., 2004). Consequently, some commentators suggest many Aboriginal women remain in violent situations (Tually et al., 2008, p. 47).

Discussing how best to conceptualise the complex web of services that Aboriginal women encounter, the Gordon review in Western Australia drew upon an ecological framework of primary, secondary and tertiary levels of service (Table 1). An ecological framework accounts for the different layers to issues of causation and in the commission of violence (Heise, 1998).

Table 1 An ecological framework to service delivery

Level	Context	Description
Primary	Socio-cultural, political and economic context or macro-system	The provision of basic services to the community generally to assist, educate and raise awareness of what is available, rights and entitlements
Secondary	Situational and community level Institutional and service ecosystem	The provision of targeted support services to those who are vulnerable
Tertiary	Individual	The provision of services after the problem has occurred

Adapted from Gordon et al., 2002, pp. 24-25 and Heise, 1998.

14 See also, Robertson (1999).

15 The report of this research could not be located for this review but is referred to in Oberin, J. (2006). "Urgent and critical: Women and children in Australia experiencing domestic violence - national research findings" [online]. *Parity*, vol.19, no.2, Mar 2006, p. 45-46. Available at: http://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=332830374818978;res=IELHSS ISSN: 1032-6170. [accessed on 27 Apr 15].

The focus of this review (and this part in particular) is on victim-centred services – those usually located at secondary and tertiary levels of the ecological framework.[16] It is important to know how Aboriginal women seek help from this service web. While the literature is patchy, it is consistent in noting particular constraints that work in complex and sometimes contradictory ways. Interviews with 49 service providers in 12 rural and regional towns and working across the human and justice sectors in NSW identified shame, silence and the experience of community sanctions as deterring Aboriginal women from seeking help (Owen & Carrington, 2014). In-depth interviews with three Aboriginal women (as workers and survivors) in rural Queensland also noted how shame undermines help-seeking. The study further discussed women's desire to keep families together (Davis & Taylor, 2002). Examining Aboriginal women's access to justice in three rural locations in NSW, Moore's focus group participants additionally commented on rural cultures of tolerance to family violence compounded by Aboriginal communities turning "a blind eye" (Moore, 2002, p. 2). One of four community factors that Wendt (2009) identified as impacting on women experiencing domestic violence was distance and isolation. Aboriginal women in regional and remote Australia may experience these factors to varying degrees depending on where they live, their circumstances and the constellation of services and supports in the area. However, for many Aboriginal women, there is a relatively small, tightly woven series of social relationships, with the immediate family and family of origin at the core – this is likely irrespective of location, but is more "visible" in networks of small remote communities and regional hubs.

The enormity of disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal women can inhibit help-seeking for domestic and family violence. Focus group and small group discussions with 55 Aboriginal child protection workers from across Western Australia revealed that some Aboriginal women felt overwhelmed by the complexity of problems and the multiple levels of disadvantage confronting them (Bessarab & Crawford, 2010). This point was also made through consultations in South Australia in a whole-of-community research project, where the density of issues were described as a "swirling mass … sucking energy and meaning from the community" (Cheers et al, 2006, p.59). Another study involving 20 Aboriginal women, three Aboriginal men and five non-Aboriginal women described day-to-day survival as undermining women's capacities for longer term planning and action (Wendt et al., 2014). In their overview of help-seeking about family and domestic violence by Aboriginal women, Lumby and Farrelly note a combination of constraints and barriers. Drawing on studies about Aboriginal help seeking in relation to suicide, self-harm, ageing and disability the researchers' note that:

> Help-seeking can be compromised by factors like shame associated with the violence, fear of retaliation, family and cultural pressures to retain the family unit, community tolerance of violence, gaps in service provision, poor responses to those seeking help, threats to confidentiality in small communities, as well as cultural and language barriers. (Lumby & Farrelly, 2009, p. 1)

These researchers especially sought to examine their community discussants' experience of "the point where informal help sources would ideally communicate or connect with formal help sources, generally for the purpose of gaining advice, assistance or "transferring" the care of an individual affected by family violence" (Lumby & Farrelly, 2009, p. 3). Their focus group discussions with Aboriginal service providers in rural NSW drew a complicated picture. They noted ways in which "tight-knit communities" sustain the identity and wellbeing of community members; but community members also identified damaging factionalism and instances where women were ostracised when they applied for protection orders. Furthermore, all eight one-to-one interviews and all the focus group participants "highlighted the general preference Aboriginal people have for Aboriginal-specific formal help sources, and their importance in the community." Yet the participants also all went on to note that "such services can be inaccessible to many community members experiencing family violence because of the fact that these services are typically staffed by other community members" (Lumby & Farrelly, 2009, p. 8). This conundrum about confidentiality and the problem of "gossip" was noted by the Koori Domestic Violence Network Support Group in regional NSW (Scott et al., 2004), and in the ACT (VoCC, 2009; Whetnall & Payne, 2011). At the same time, other studies show that it is precisely the intense support provided by other women (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) that facilitates and sustains women's capacity to live without violence (Karahasan, 2014; Rawsthorne, 2010; VoCC, 2009, pp. 114-115).

16 It does not cover data on demand for services. For example, that domestic violence is a primary driver for homelessness and demand per head of population is higher in regional and remote Australia (AIHW Special Homelessness Collection 2013-14).

Overcoming barriers

Even with these constraints, studies show Aboriginal women to be active in help-seeking. Often there are a significant number of agencies involved with families (VoCC, 2009; Wendt & Baker, 2013). For example, Queensland interviews with 32 Indigenous women victims/survivors of family and domestic violence in six rural and regional sites concluded that most had disclosed or reported some of the violence to authorities or others (Cunneen, 2009a). In some areas it is Aboriginal women themselves who initiate involvement of police (Bolger, 1991).[17] Undermining women's help-seeking is a lack of access to accurate information, especially in regional and remote areas, about what is available, how it works and how it can be accessed (Cunneen, 2009b; Moore, 2002). A community-based peer mentoring program in western Sydney implemented a "bottom-up" approach to filling information gaps. A total of 49 women completed four peer mentor programs with outcomes demonstrated across personal, micro, exo and macro levels. The evaluation stated that the approach "was about acknowledging Aboriginal women as experts, establishing trust and drawing on informal community leadership" (Rawsthorne, 2014, p.14).

A number of studies have focused on the barriers facing Aboriginal women attempting to access protection through justice entities. Examining the situation for Aboriginal women in regional NSW, Adams and Hunter (2007) summarise the barriers as including:

- victims' entrenched distrust of authorities;
- inadequate and intimidating police and court services;
- absence of subsidised and accessible legal advice and assistance;
- concerns about confidentiality; and
- distant, underfunded and overstretched support services.

These hurdles were also all encountered in Kelly's research into legal protections for Aboriginal women in northern NSW. Her interviews with ten women further identified complicated and lengthy procedures as problematic as well as inadequacies in information about protection orders, their function and specificity of conditions (Kelly, 1999). Similar issues are encountered for Aboriginal women accessing legal protection in Queensland (Cunneen, 2009b), the Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) lands (Lloyd, 2004), ACT (VoCC, 2009), Victoria (AFVPLS Victoria, 2010), the Northern Territory (Payne, 1992; TEWLS, 2006) and Western Australia (Law Reform Commission of WA 2013); and were affirmed in a national review of legal responses (ALRC/NSWLRC, 2010). Writing from the perspective of service providers, commentators argue that Aboriginal women residing in remote and regional locations are particularly under pressure from families to remain with abusive partners and there is little access to or support for processes for variation of conditions in protection orders (Medland, 2007; Moore, 2002; TEWLS, 2006). In short, sometimes accessing support services including formal justice support has complicating consequences. Help-seeking and the provision of support is rarely a one-off or uncomplicated exercise.

A detailed study in Queensland exemplifies this point. Cunneen (2009b) examined administrative data from Queensland justice and other help services. He found that Indigenous women were less likely to file for a protection order on their own motion and are more likely to be the subject of police-initiated applications. There was lower use of services than expected by Indigenous women but also different use patterns. Indigenous women were less likely to seek counselling and court support than non-Indigenous women but were significantly more likely to seek crisis intervention (60% Indigenous as opposed to 25% non-Indigenous women) (Cunneen, 2009b, p. 73-80). The research concluded that, for Indigenous women, there was "a demonstrated need for primary crisis support services as a prerequisite for successful use of domestic violence orders" and for basic provision such as emergency and transition accommodation, transport and food. Overall this research found that Indigenous women did not report if basic support services were not in place (Cunneen, 2009, p. 110). Bolger's review of the Atunypa Wiru Minyma Uwankaraku (Good Protection for all Women similarly documents the manner in which case work alongside community development and justice agency networking generated positive effects for individuals and communities as a whole in remote areas (Bolger, 1996; Urbis Keys Young, 2001).[18]

17 That victims of family and domestic violence are the initiators of police contact following violence has been found in Australian and overseas studies (Holder, 2007; Fleury-Steiner et al., 2006).

18 See also Rawsthorne (2014) for a peer and community development approach to building this capacity for pathways from informal to formal support.

Aboriginal user assessments of service providers

When Aboriginal women do access help the research findings are mixed on how well interactions proceed. Service-based evaluations using self-reported feedback record positive assessments. Atkinson evaluated the story, art, theatre, music and drama of a Northern Territory service "through a trauma lens" and found these were valued highly by participants (Atkinson, 2013, p. 7). This diversity of activity emphasising corporeal, community and cultural aspects feature in healing work nation-wide (Gilmore, 2013). Client feedback and interviews with 55 Aboriginal women from four locations were analysed in an evaluation of healing and outreach activities run by Victoria's Family Violence and Prevention Legal Services. The activities were a mix of day out and residential, and encompassed pampering, self-esteem work as well as information giving and discussion. The evaluation found positive impact on participants' self-reports of well-being, strengthened friendships and networks, and sense of belonging (Karahasan, 2014, p. 13).

The flexibility and responsiveness of community sector and multi-program services has commonly been received favourably in studies. In-depth interviews with 13 (of a service pool of 31) Aboriginal women users of a transitional housing program in South Australia commented on the strong sense of connection with other residents and workers that developed. The research "showed individualised, flexible, and open-ended support as well as practical outcomes of stable, safe housing for themselves and their children were particularly valued" (Wendt & Baker, 2013, p. 511).

Reports have observed how important flexible use of safe houses and cooling off spaces has been for women in remote areas (Lloyd, 2009; Tually et al., 2009). An evaluation of outreach services from the women's shelter in central Australia for which 19 Aboriginal women were interviewed also found positive comment on flexibility and responsiveness as expressions of workers "looking out for them" (Gander, 2013, p. 3). Similar comment about the flexibility of non-government services was repeated in consultations conducted in NSW on responses to child abuse (NSW Aboriginal Child Sexual Assault Taskforce, 2006). Interviews with 15 Aboriginal victims/survivors in the ACT about their experience of responses from justice authorities found mixed experiences with community, government and justice services, but general there was agreement about the responsiveness of the by staff in community sector services to individual contexts (VoCC, 2009).

Using case file analysis, researchers in the ACT found that Aboriginal women's use of a community-based domestic violence advocacy service was generally not confined to single engagements and that the complexity of their circumstances must be recognised. Examination of 49 case files involving Aboriginal women found multiple engagements that were usually self-initiated and often over considerable periods of time. One woman, for example, was engaged with the service over 16 years. The service regularly acted as a bridge, advocate and go-between for the individual and government services. An advocacy organisation acts in many ways but system navigation for clients is critical (VoCC, 2009). Using her own experience of traditional healing and western psycho-analysis, Goreng Goreng's study is similarly revealing of the length of time and multiple engagements involved in journeying to wellbeing (Goreng Goreng, 2012).

The ACT, Northern Territory, NSW and South Australian service studies all identified trust as a key ingredient to Aboriginal women's assessments of services. Emphasising the quality of the client staff interactions in the transitional housing program in Adelaide, Aboriginal residents commented on the "general helpfulness, approachability, friendliness, openness, and non-judgemental nature" of the transitional housing staff (Wendt & Baker, 2013, p. 519; Rawsthorne, 2014). In the ACT, trust was found to result partly from experience shared through Aboriginal knowledge networks and partly through individual involvement with a service (Whetnall & Payne, 2011). A review of research on building safe and supportive families and communities for Indigenous children in Australia identified trust in services as being generated through longer timeframes for engagement and through the participation of Indigenous families (Lohoar, 2012).

Studies also point to the importance of practical support as critical to positive assessments by Aboriginal women. For women who had support services to assist their engagements with courts, it was information that was assessed by them as "the most valuable" (Research and Analysis Branch (RAB), 2014, p. 15). Practical support was identified as crucial in two South Australian evaluations. Women interviewed about their experience of transitional housing emphasised the importance of assistance with settling children, children's activities and support more generally with their children as well as giving prominence to stable and equipped accommodation and individualised support such as help with budgeting and treatment for substance use (Wendt & Baker, 2013).

Similarly, evaluation of a family violence partnership found that practical and material support, coupled with emotional and educative support produces sustainable outcomes for Aboriginal families (Wendt & Baker, 2010).

In summary, there are a very small number of research and evaluation studies focused on non-legal and non-clinical service responses to Aboriginal women experiencing family and domestic violence that use primary methods (Table 2). Most are limited by small self-selecting samples. Consideration of this literature is also hampered by incomplete descriptions of both the service and the methodology used in the evaluation.

Studies involving Aboriginal women victims/survivors point to the importance of:

- access to primary crisis support services;
- practical support across emergency and transitional accommodation, food and transportation, help with supporting children;
- information that can be discussed one-to-one;
- respect demonstrated in language, interaction and inclusion;
- flexibility and responsiveness to individual and family needs;
- progressive demonstrations of culturally safe environments and practices;
- sustained and respectful relationships with well-trained workers that reach out into communities;
- services that are networked with other human, financial, justice and housing services and are authoritative within these;
- longer-term and outreach interactions;
- sympathetic and strong women in communities acting as access and referral points;
- services working through a trauma-lens coupled with emotional and educative support; and
- capacity and responsiveness to tailor legal protections.

Table 2 Service evaluation studies using primary victim-centred methods

Author(s)	Year	Sample	Location[1]	Type of service(s)	Study design
Cunneen	2009, 2005	32 Indigenous FDV victims/survivors 132 service providers	Queensland Rural and remote (x6)	Police, government, legal assistance and community services	Legal research, qualitative interviews, quantitative analysis of administrative data
Gander	2013	19 Aboriginal women service users 9 Staff members 16 Stakeholders	Northern Territory Remote Town	Outreach	*Service evaluation*: Qualitative interviews Service data
Goreng Goreng	2012	1 Aboriginal woman		Self-directed traditional healing and Western psychotherapy	Auto-ethnography

Karahasan	2014	55 Indigenous women/ service users Staff interviews (n=?)	Victoria 4 sites	Healing group activities, residential, legal advice (within Aboriginal FV Prevention Legal Services)	*Service evaluation*: Face-to-face and phone interviews Participant satisfaction surveys Telephone conversations Service provider feedback
Kelly	1999	10 Aboriginal women	NSW Regional site	Police responders and AVOs	Qualitative interviews
Lumby and Farrelly	2009	8 interviews 13 focus group participants	NSW Rural	Service system generally	Qualitative interviews Focus groups
Moore	2002	37 Aboriginal women victims/survivors and service practitioners	NSW 3 rural towns	Justice system responses and AVOs	Administrative data Focus groups (2 per site) Case studies
Research and Analysis Branch, WA Dept of AG	2014	17 victims/survivors interviews 661 victim feedback surveys (mixed ethnicities)	Western Australia Metro and regional	Specialist FV Courts	*Service evaluation*: Qualitative interviews User feedback surveys
Scott et al	2004	58 Aboriginal community members 31 Service providers	NSW Regional	Various	*Consultations* Questionnaire
VoCC	2009	49 service case files 25 FV prosecutions involving an Aboriginal victim 15 Aboriginal women victims/survivors 20 Aboriginal justice sector workers	ACT Metro	Community-based advocacy service Prosecution	Case file analysis Qualitative semi-structured interviews Administrative data analysis
Wendt and Baker	2013	13 Aboriginal women service users	South Australia Metro	Transitional accommodation, multi-service	Qualitative interviews
Wendt and Baker	2010	13 Aboriginal women service users 9 service providers	South Australia Metro	Family violence partnership program	Qualitative interviews Administrative data
Whetnall and Payne	2011	31 Aboriginal participants	ACT Metro	Generic victim support and advocacy	*Consultations:* Focus groups Consultations

[1] Location in which sample was derived

Aboriginal staff and community assessments of service providers

A range of studies draw upon focus groups and consultations with Aboriginal staff working in a range of organisations in order to illuminate problems for Aboriginal women using support services (Table 3). These repeat some of the issues raised by Aboriginal women themselves (see above) and additionally mention staffing matters and the desirability of cultural safety in service provision.

Table 3 Service evaluation studies using primary victim-centred methods

Author(s)	Year	Sample	Location[1]	Type of service(s)	Study design
Bessarab and Crawford	2010	55 Aboriginal child protection workers	Western Australia Metro and regional	Child protection services	Focus groups Small group discussions
Blagg et al	2000	Aboriginal community members (n=?) Service providers (n=?)	Western Australia Metro, regional, remote	Various	Consultations
Bolger	1996	Aboriginal community members (n=?) Service providers (n=?)	APY Lands (SA, WA, NT)	Domestic Violence Service	Administrative data and case files Individual and group discussions
Cheers et al	2006	25 Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal workers 11 Aboriginal community members 9 Elders 10 Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal workers	South Australia Regional	Community setting	Interviews Focus groups Elder focus groups Workshops Service audit
Davis and Taylor	2002	3 Aboriginal women community DV workers	Queensland Rural	Informal support	In-depth story-telling
Memmott et al	2013	Shelter workers (n=?)	Tennant Creek, Western Australia	Shelter	Consultations
Owen and Carrington	2014	49 rural service providers	NSW Rural and regional town (12 sites)	Human services Criminal justice system	Qualitative interviews
Rawsthorne	2010, 2014	38 Aboriginal women program participants	NSW Metro	Peer mentor community education	Focus groups (participants, reference group, stakeholders =5) Staff interviews Observation and document review
Wendt et al	2014	20 Aboriginal women 3 Aboriginal men 5 non-Aboriginal women	South Australia Metro	Community	Consultations

[1] Location in which sample was derived

Consultations with 28 workers from various Aboriginal service providers and networks within the northern Adelaide region revealed a perception that the organisation and location of many services were "geared towards the service provider's needs…" rather than to those of Aboriginal women accessing the service (Wendt et al., 2014, p. 23). Recurring in the findings of the consultation studies was reference to the demanding skill set required to support Aboriginal clients and how this translates into trust. Aboriginal child protection workers in Western Australia agreed that building trust "takes time" and that "you need to prove yourself to people" (Bessarab and Crawford, 2010, p. 186). In the ACT, the notion of workers proving themselves to users of victim services was seeing that workers really wanted to help, were constant and were available for face-to-face conversation outside of office settings (Whetnall & Payne, 2011).[19]

Moreover these studies suggest that, where Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff are advocating for Aboriginal women as victims/survivors with other community, government and justice services, these larger bodies need to be respectful of the jobs workers are attempting to perform (Bessarab & Crawford, 2010; Bolger, 1996; VoCC, 2009). For example, the practice of "referral" may be ineffective for a client if it is simply giving her a calling card to initiate the contact herself. An enhanced referral practice could include "hot" referral with a worker initiating the call and facilitating the connection by passing messages or by accompanying the person or some other combination of actions.

Building relationships and entry points

- These observations suggest that a different way of understanding extant notions of integration and coordination is being well-connected in service networks;
- having larger services conduct outreach; and
- being authoritative within these relationships (Munns, 2010).

The approaches are built more on client-centred needs and on flexibility than on rigid templates. Respect for the authority of specialist and community-based services that worker consultations reveal is linked to respect for their independence. Independence from government services has been recognised as contributing to Aboriginal women's sense of cultural safety (Karahasan, 2014). Discussed later in this review as "authorising outsiders", independent and non-Aboriginal advocates can facilitate an entry point both for Aboriginal women seeking pathways to formal intervention, as well as for those government services looking for dialogue and engagement with Aboriginal women and entry into Aboriginal communities more generally.

Partly, entry points such as these are stepping stones in the intricate journeying that Aboriginal women undertake in managing the different impacts of family and domestic violence. To make this work, researchers have identified practitioners' agreement on the importance of services - especially those dominated by non-Aboriginal staff and/or users - which are "culturally safe". Sometimes this term is used interchangeably with discussion of services that are "culturally appropriate" and staff that are "culturally competent" (Walker et al., 2015). Contemporary standards for cultural competence require proficiency at systemic, organisational, professional and individual practitioner levels (National Health and Medical Research Council 2006; Cultural Respect Framework 2004).[20] Building cultural safety is described as a "developmental process" (Cripps & Miller, 2010, p. 11). Walker and colleagues compiled standards from different disciplines serving mental health but note continuing implementation failure (Walker et al., 2015). However, across different sectors, including those responding to family and domestic violence, there are negligible evaluations of how cultural safety works in practice for Aboriginal women.

Commentators identify the importance of employing Aboriginal staff as crucial to building culturally safe services (Munns, 2010). What this means in practice, however, can vary. In the ACT, Whetnall and Payne (2011) undertook focus group discussions and consultation with community members

19 There are similar findings in health-care studies. Continuity of support person was identified in a study of ante-natal care for Aboriginal mothers (Kildea et al., 2012). Flexibility and constancy was important in nursing care (Smith et al., 2006).

20 Also found in the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council, national *Cultural Respect Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health 2004–2009*.

and agency staff in order to identify ways in which awareness, knowledge, access to and use of generic victim support services could be improved for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. A recurring theme from participants was that they would be unlikely to approach a mainstream agency unless there was an Indigenous worker or someone who they trusted worked there (Whetnall & Payne 2011, p. 4). The Aboriginal consultants in the northern Adelaide study explained that cultural safety is more likely to be achieved by Aboriginal specific services which are run by trained Aboriginal people and is family and community focused (Wendt et al., 2014, p. 24). Snell and Small describe the service in which they work as providing transitional accommodation, out-reach crisis care supports, primary health care and wellbeing services for Aboriginal women and their children experiencing family violence. They explain that only Aboriginal workers are employed in a deliberate strategy to increase cultural safety of the service (Snell and Small, 2009, p. 1). An assessment of ways to improve accessibility of the Domestic Violence Crisis Service in the ACT recommended a position be established within the service allocated specifically to an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person (Weaver, 2013).

Aboriginal services and workers

Exclusively Aboriginal run and managed services are viewed as significant not only for Aboriginal women needing support, but also for building confidence and self-esteem in Aboriginal women "as they experience themselves competent, accepted and respected in the running of an organisation for the Aboriginal community and the community at large" (Smith and Williams 1992, p. 8). However, recruitment and retention of Aboriginal staff is commonly noted as a challenge. For example, in exploring the strengths and challenges for the Tennant Creek Women's Refuge Service, Memmott and colleagues (2013) specifically identify a lack of younger Aboriginal women staff. Similarly, there is much discussion of unrealistic expectations held by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community members that Aboriginal workers are responsible for solving all issues involving Aboriginal clients (Lumby & Farrelly, 2009; Wendt et al., 2014; Whetnall & Payne 2011; Wilson, 1996). An organisational Aboriginal Liaison Officer (ALO) may be considered the "go to" person for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. However this can result in a struggle for the worker to balance Aboriginal family obligations with employment obligations (Wendt et al., 2014, p.26). Studies also suggest that Aboriginal employees who may deal with family violence with clients as well as in their own family contexts may experience trauma and burnout, and may be inadequately supervised and supported with consequent high turnover (Adams & Hunter, 2007; Memmott et al., 2013, p. 35; Wendt et al., 2014, p. 11). In her exploration of trauma-informed services, Atkinson discusses the importance of training courses designed to both help workers heal their own trauma, and to prepare these workers to support others in their recovery (Atkinson 2013, p. 11). Cultural competence absorbed through ad hoc and limited training sessions for non-Aboriginal services and staffs was regarded as derisory by Aboriginal workers in rural NSW (Lumby & Farrelly, 2009). Rather, cultural competence is preferably developed as sustained knowledge-building of Aboriginal community and kinship networks. This long term engagement builds capacity to create pathways for women between informal and formal sources of help.

Yet being embedded in kin and family networks presents dilemmas for Aboriginal workers, some of which (as discussed earlier) impact on women's help-seeking. Cripps (2008) highlights that Aboriginal people are loathe to name violence directly and are protective of their communities. This context has a consequent muffling effect on the violence. She argues that this context creates complexity for victims of family violence in their decision-making about seeking help. Wendt (2009, p.

114) also discusses how extended family can be an advantage or can create difficulties for rural women. Her consultations with human service workers indicated how women can feel bound and loyal to extended family where there are close-knit networks and personal connections. Where there are divisions and conflict within the extended family it may be especially difficult to receive support or for family members to acknowledge and challenge men's abusive behaviour.

With these challenges in mind, some studies have identified that non-Aboriginal workers serve critical roles in service delivery. Aboriginal women interviewed in studies in NSW, South Australia and the ACT observed that non-Aboriginal workers can avert Aboriginal women's concerns about favouritism and confidentiality, and counteract a sense of acceptance of family violence as normal (Lumby & Farrelly, 2009; Wendt & Baker, 2013; Whetnall & Payne 2011). These studies reveal critical priorities for non-Aboriginal staff at this interface. Workers should be:

- reflexive in their own practice;
- search to increase their knowledge of colonialism and its myriad effects;
- engage in a continual basis with awareness of power dynamics and inequalities between themselves and Aboriginal clients; and
- are embedded within organisations that display respect for Indigenous knowledges, cultures and ways of being (Karahasan, 2014; Munns, 2010; Walker et al., 2015; Wendt et al., 2014).

"Outsider" workers and services

Moreover, some scholars have argued that, in some circumstances for Aboriginal people and in particular Aboriginal women, it may even be "culturally appropriate" for an "outsider" to intervene and/or be taking a lead on behavioural change (Sutton, 2011, p. 136).[21] Referencing to Brady's (2004, pp. 114-17) term of "an authorising other", Sutton writes that a trusted, respected, and knowledgeable person who is outside of the immediate social network can give an excuse or solid reason to legitimise a change in a person's behaviour. Writing as chairperson of the NPY Women's Council, Margaret Smith says outsiders are "non-kin, owe no obligations to disputing parties or to perpetrators and victims".[22] Further discussing the experience of the NPY Women's Council Domestic Violence Service Lloyd agrees that:

> The authorising outsider has a vital role to play in facilitating and contributing to an effective response to domestic and family violence in this[23] socio-cultural environment where violence is tolerated and normalised, where blame and responsibility is externalised, where kin do not support or are unable to actively protect women who are being abused, and where there are violent sanctions against anyone seen or believed to be interfering in someone else's business. (Lloyd, 2014, p. 107)

It may be de-facto recognition of this need to have an authorising other that has led to partnership approaches to services and programs, with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous team workers, and a hybridisation of practice content and delivery that has adapted to local circumstance. The point is also made by Bolger in her review of the NPY Women's Council Domestic Violence Service (Bolger, 1996, p. 15). The desirability of shared collaborative working was also identified in Wendt's research on family and domestic violence in small rural community in South Australia. She documents an Aboriginal colleague saying:

> … white people don't want to be seen to be stepping on the toes of Aboriginal people, Aboriginal people are sometimes concerned that if they say something it will be taken the wrong way… we have to get past that… we need white and black men and women working in partnerships and managers of programs and agencies saying that I am happy to be involved in that. (Wendt, 2009, p. 19)

21 Sutton writes that "Indigenous Australians frequently recognise that their own social and cultural resources are not enough to enable them to cope with the problems with which they are confronted in a post-colonial world, yet they can hardly be accused of blaming the victim" (Sutton 2011, p. 137).

22 Foreword in Lloyd (2004, p. 3).

23 Central Australia

As a policy response to family and domestic violence, the authorising other in crisis interventions for women has been enshrined in legislation. For example, the Domestic Violence Crisis Service is mandated to assist victims who report incidents to police in the ACT (Wallace et.al, 2007).[24] In the Northern Territory members of the public as well as authorities are required under certain circumstances to report, and the onus is on police to take the lead through pro-arrest policies and applications for domestic violence orders.[25]

Of course the idea of "mandate" is not something which is derived solely from legislation. In her evaluation of family violence early intervention and prevention programs offered by Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service (FVPLS) Victoria, Karahasan highlights the importance of community control and engagements that adjust the power imbalance between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. Mainstream providers are invited to events organised and managed by the Aboriginal-controlled service thereby inverting 200 years of disempowering relations. She documents other elements to designing cultural safety such as ensuring that bureaucratic language is avoided, using Aboriginal program facilitators who are known and trusted by participants, engaging in program activities such as beading or weaving that reinforce pride in the strengths of Aboriginal tradition and culture, and the creation of a welcoming environment through appropriate venue selection that is based on ease of access to the community and that has natural surrounds (Karahasan, 2014, pp. 9-10). Thus the notion of external mandate and of authorised outsider should be enacted from a place of deep respect and engagement with Aboriginal women and not as a repetition of dominance.

Similar concerns underpin cultural competence initiatives with sexual assault workers. Keel explored knowledge building and awareness training amongst sexual assault workers responding to Aboriginal women. Indigenous sexual assault workers identified that the use of visual images or artwork was seen as a culturally appropriate way of talking about sexual assault and the use of "music as a tool to heal and promote change" (Keel, 2004, p. 6) was identified as a respectful response. In this study, an Indigenous worker explained that "cultural issues are more important than mainstream issues in delivering a high standard of service delivery" (Keel, 2004, p. 13), contrasting the set timeframe for counselling in mainstream services, with the approach of her service. Inflexibility with time within mainstream services was commonly raised by community members in NSW (Lumby & Farrelly, 2009).

Studies involving community members and service providers point to the importance of:

- deep and sustained trust building;
- long-term relationships between communities and services;
- involvement of service users;
- both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff well-trained, supervised, mentored and supported;
- transparency and accountability in decision-making and service planning;
- caseloads that recognise the challenge of managing complexity in the lives of Aboriginal women, children and men;
- strong adherence to confidentiality in service delivery;
- holistic services tailored to individual circumstances and comprising mixed activities;
- well-connected services that carry authority within networks and collaborations;
- environments and practices imbued with cultural safety;
- services that demonstrate understanding of the deep impact of colonisation; protectionism and assimilation, and entrenched disadvantage; and
- build and support women's capacities and leadership.

24 Part 4 *Domestic Violence Agencies Act 1986* (ACT).

25 *Shelter-based advocacy* Section 124A *Domestic and Family Violence Act* (NT) (2007).

Selected evidence from outside Australia

Overall, the evidence base on supports for Aboriginal women experiencing family and domestic violence is slim and patchy. Despite both similarities and differences to context, what can be learned from research conducted outside Australia? There is a wealth of research on victimisation, help-seeking and experiences interacting with help agencies particularly justice. However, few international studies specifically focus on Indigenous women. This section therefore examines studies chosen for their salience to the focus on women's specialist services in multi-ethnic populations. Those selected concentrate on victim-centred responses and services, use comparative designs and with larger samples (Table 4).

Table 4 Service evaluation studies (overseas) using primary victim-centred methods.

Country	Author(s)	Year	Sample	Location[1]	Type of service(s)	Study design
USA	Bennett, et al	2004	638 matched service users 1000+ others (mixed ethnicities)	Illinois Multi-site	Hotline, Advocacy, Counselling, Shelter	Face-to-face and phone
USA	DePrince et al	2011, 2012	236 victims/survivors (mixed ethnicities)	Denver, Colorado	Victim-centred coordinated community response	Treatment and control groups
UK	Kelly et al	2014	100 victims/survivors (T1) (mixed ethnicities) 7 children (T1) 12 key workers	UK	Various shelter-based services	Interviews, surveys, focus groups, art workshops (victims) Interviews with children Interviews with workers
USA	Krishnan et al	2001	100 women victims/ survivors (mixed ethnicities)	New Mexico Rural	Shelter	
USA	Kulkarni et al	2012	30 victims/survivors (mixed ethnicities)		Multi-service agency	Focus groups
USA	Sullivan and Bybee	1999	278 victims/survivors (mixed ethnicities)	Midwest	Community-based (shelter) advocacy	Treatment and control groups Longitudinal

Evaluating "effectiveness"

Sullivan and Bybee focussed on shelter-based programs in the American mid-west to consider the effectiveness of advocacy. Using experimental and a control conditions, they interviewed 278 women of different ethnic backgrounds six times over a 2 year period. The 10 week post-shelter intervention "involved providing trained advocates to work one-on-one with women, helping generate and access community resources they needed to reduce their risk of future violence from abusive partners." The research found that "women who worked with advocates experienced less violence over time, reported higher quality of life and social support, and had less difficulty obtaining community resources" (Sullivan & Bybee, 1999, p. 43).

Although their research could not pinpoint precisely the specific elements to improved protection and quality of life, Sullivan and Bybee comment on shared theoretical underpinnings. Firstly, they say, the victim/survivor guided the intervention not the advocate. Second "activities were designed to make the community more responsive to the woman's needs, not to change the survivor's thinking or her belief system". And finally the program supposed a "belief that survivors were competent adults capable of making sound decisions for themselves" (Sullivan & Bybee, 1999, p. 51).

Krishnan and her colleagues sought to understand differential help-seeking of women from different ethnicities in rural New Mexico. Interviewing 100 women who entered a shelter, they found similarity across ethnic background in women's use of counselling and reporting to law enforcement. However, they found that Hispanic women stayed in relationships longer, were twice as likely to seek restraining orders and significantly more likely to contemplate suicide (Krishnan, et al., 2001, pp. 4-35). The research concluded that services needed to be designed from a firm understanding of different needs in different locations.

Another large multi-site study in mid-western USA considered the effectiveness of different services provided by domestic violence agencies to multi-ethnic populations (Bennett et al., 2004). The researchers examined hotline, advocacy, counselling and shelter activities across 54 organisations. The first phase of the study involved researchers working with workers in the sector in clarifying objectives, measurement tools, data collection procedures and workshops and training. Staff administered the data collection as part of their service delivery to a multi-ethnic population of women. The study used cluster analysis to evaluate like services.

Overall, results supported the effectiveness of domestic violence programs in all five service areas studied. While the evaluation had limitations, the authors suggest that:

a. domestic violence victims gain important information about violence and increase their support during their participation in domestic violence counselling, advocacy, and hotline services;
b. domestic violence victims perceive an improvement in their decision-making ability during their participation in domestic violence counselling and advocacy programs;
c. domestic violence victims increase their self-efficacy and coping skills while participating in domestic violence counselling programs;
d. domestic violence victims feel safe while in shelter; and
e. the effects of domestic violence counselling programs are small but significant"[26] (Bennett, et al., 2004, p. 826).

Bennett et al. comment on the need for more in-depth and contextualised research. They also note that services' work extends beyond the immediate effects of domestic violence to include assistance addressing homelessness and poverty (2004, p. 827).

Survivor-defined practice

Seeking to deepen understanding about "survivor-defined practice", Kulkarni and colleagues conducted focus groups in the US with 30 survivors (including separate groups for African American survivors and for Spanish-speaking survivors) and with 24 hotline advocates (2012). Some advocates also identified as survivors. The research found four distinct themes to enhanced service delivery:

- providing empathy;
- supporting empowerment;
- individualising care; and
- maintaining ethical boundaries (2012, p. 91).

Reflecting on comment from a woman who said "I don't even know where to begin. Where do I start?", one advocate asserted that safety planning should be firmly cognisant of women's realities. Safety planning was "a process that was unique to individual survivors' goals, situations, and resources" (Kulkani et al., 2012, p. 93). Undermining their capacity to be responsive, advocates identified inadequate resources, staff burnout, lack of training and poor integration with other community providers (p. 94). While acknowledging these constraints, the researchers emphasised that survivors valued "active listening, supportive presence and empowerment" (p. 97). While being denied service because of lack of resources is unacceptable to survivors, so too is any experience of disrespect.

26 An effect that was not surprising claimed the researchers in light of the fact that the mean number of counselling sessions was slightly more than two (Bennett et al 2004, p. 826).

Victim-centred outreach

Research by DePrince and her colleagues in Colorado focussed on victim-centred (as opposed to offender-centred) coordinated community responses (DePrince et al., 2011, 2012). They used a randomised longitudinal design to recruit 236 ethnically diverse women who had reported domestic violence to police. A community-based outreach agency initiated phone contact to offer confidential and independent means of learning about and accessing support and services. Another group of women were contacted by a criminal justice system-based advocate to make referrals to community-based agencies should an individual then elect to do so (DePrince et al., 2011, p. 7). That is, one program was pro-active in assisting women, and the other placed the burden on women to seek further help for themselves. Women in either of these groups were significantly more likely to engage with prosecution and more likely to attend court than were women without contact or who had declined contact. This positive impact was most pronounced for ethnic minority women and women with higher socio-economic status. Those who were particularly responsive to community-based outreach were women who continued to cohabit with their abuser (p. 13). Outreach women also reported greater decreases in psychological distress, depression and fear. This latter feature was particularly strong for ethnic minority women. The second and third interviews found that women in all groups continued to be vulnerable to re-victimisation from the abuser. The study was unique in using spatial analysis techniques to examine transportation barriers. This showed localised variation in social supports, fear and distress. It also showed that "women's perception of getting to court strongly predicted whether they attended or not" (p. 15). In particular, women who relied on public transportation and women who anticipated transportation problems were less likely to go to court.

The researchers comment that the usual derogatory reflections about fluctuations to women's "cooperation" with authorities may be seriously misplaced. Women's decision-making, they say, is both undermined by institutional barriers and by the absence of independent support and sources of information and advice.[27] Their study re-focuses attention on research that is actually victim–centred and on the potential in community-based outreach. Outreach per se is of positive benefit (DePrince et al., 2012).

Re-building lives after violence

Another longitudinal study, this time in the UK, examined how women rebuilt their lives following crisis intervention (Kelly, et al., 2014). This study interviewed women from different ethnic backgrounds on four occasions (or "waves") over a 3.5 year period. The study identified that leaving was an on-going struggle of battling "the system", housing insecurity, and financial instability as well as navigating ebbs and flows to social support. The multiple interviews enabled the research to identify a sharp expansion in women's "space for action"[28] after leaving the abusive relationship, dips at waves two and three, and then a steady opening up again at wave four. Researchers found that, with the support of an advocate, women were able to secure better responses from other agencies. The on-going specialist contact meant that women could "dip in and out of support as required, creating their own 'basket of resources' fitted to their particular need and circumstance" (p. 7). The researchers comment that this is a very different type of model than funders' current preference for ones based on brief intervention and risk reduction strategies. Over the period of the research, it was clear that remaking selves and lives was lengthy but "foundation stones" that help facilitate this were:

- having opportunities to explore domestic violence and its legacies through counselling, but also with trusted family and friends;
- being and feeling safe;
- becoming settled and able to make a new home;
- improved health/ability to manage health conditions;
- children in new schools and less anxious, able to make and see friends;
- (re)entering employment and/or education and training;
- a tight, but trusted, network of family and friends; and
- financial security (Kelly et al., 2014, p. 8).

As a minimum they recommend that, over a 2-3 year period on leaving a refuge, women can continue to access shelter and "floating support, legal advice and advocacy, short courses on understanding domestic violence, specialist counselling and group work for women and for children, skills and confidence building workshops, and workshops and individual support orientated to (re)entering employment" (p. 8).

27 This point is also made by Cunneen in his Queensland study (2009a, b).

28 A space for action scale was devised for the research. It comprised a series of statements across 8 domains: parenting, sense of self, community, friends and family, help-seeking, competence, well-being and safety, and financial situation (Kelly et al 2014, p. 15).

Unique challenges in regional and remote areas

Most of these overseas studies were located in regional settings. However, aside from the Colorado study's use of spatial analysis, these did not specifically attend to the unique implications of service delivery outside the urban environment. Much of the Australian literature canvassed earlier in this review on services acknowledges these challenges of distance, geography and sparse and scattered populations.[29] This section considers the issues more deliberately.

As a start, however, it must be stated that the majority of Aboriginal people live in urban areas in ways that are concentrated, dispersed and often "unseen" by white Australia. This blindness distorts government programs and funding and creates "disconnection of white and black senses of reality and knowledge" (Atkinson et al., 2013, p. 313). Being unseen in urban and town environments can be conceptual as well literal. For example, in their portrayal of social movement change and the history to domestic violence reform focussed on the ACT, Hopkins and McGregor (1991, p. 7) make mention of racism only in relation to the American civil rights movement and fail to discuss issues facing Aboriginal women at all.

Moreover "seeing" Aboriginal women, children and men is seeing a particular place and context. And seeing place and context is not simply attending to the physical environment. Rather it includes aspects that are social, political and economic. As an example, in her book on domestic violence in rural Australia, Wendt (2009) argues that human service workers need to look for positive social elements and community strengths, as well as enhancing one's understanding of the problems and issues.[30] Regional and remote environments are not problematic in their nature, and living outside major towns and cities are affirming on many levels. For many Aboriginal people being *on country* or having access to *country* is vital.

The corollary of this is to consider and appreciate the local context in terms of existing services and the possibilities that may exist to improve responses to family and domestic violence. From the literature reviewed here, it is apparent there is a tendency to categorise responses to family and domestic violence according to:

- the needs or vulnerabilities of specified groups of women;
- the type of service or program it is, often employing a spectrum from prevention to crisis intervention; and
- the context in which the response is delivered, typically using geographic categories such as urban, regional and remote.

These are not mutually exclusive categories – for example, a response may involve crisis intervention and support by police and a women's service for women who report an assault in a regional centre and more sustained follow-up support delivered in remote locations. This section considers firstly what has been said about social services in regional and remote locations, secondly, on service delivery for Aboriginal clients and their communities, and third, on family and domestic violence services.

Issues in regional and remote service delivery

The range and quantum of social services across Australia are not uniformly distributed. There are clusters or nodes of service delivery that reflect population density and the history of how services have evolved over time. In major cities, and in large regional towns, there are both management and administrative centres for social services, with both the government and non-government sectors engaged in providing face-to-face, client-based services. The range and degree of specialisation in services, and the likelihood that a service is actually based in the local community, seems to diminish rapidly once you move outside the main urban centres.

In their discussion of service delivery in regional and remote areas, Roufeil and Battye (2008) refer to the obvious impact that distance has on service costs, productive time on site, and staff exhaustion due to travel commitments. Difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff are linked to professional issues (burnout, isolation, inadequate orientation, training), personal issues (housing, children and partner), community factors (such as long time to foster acceptance, pressure to be all things to all people), and feelings of personal safety (Putt et al., 2011).[31]

29 There are a number of ways that rurality and remoteness can be classified. Working definitions employed by Roufeil and Battye (2008, p. 3) are "differentiated by decreasing populations and accessibility to services … [where]:

- "regional" refers to non-urban centres with a population over 25,000 and with relatively good access to services;
- "rural" refers to non-urban localities of under 25,000 with reduced accessibility; and
- "remote" communities are those of fewer than 5,000 people with very restricted accessibility."

30 In an article that argues for more and improved services to address family and domestic violence in remote NSW Aboriginal communities, Adams and Hunter assert that it is "very difficult to understand the situation for someone who hasn't lived in the community and does not know the 'values' " (2007, p. 28).

31 In this NT survey of service providers, town respondents compared with remote respondents were more likely to say community safety was affecting staff retention (Putt et al., 2011).

Roufeil and Battye's review noted different lists of enabling factors, models of intervention, and good practice that could improve access. The enabling factors they identified to improve services in regional and remote locations include:

- "strong leadership with a clear vision;
- local knowledge;
- community readiness;
- investment in community development;
- strong, supported local governance and management arrangements;
- links with other service providers and key stakeholders, such as schools and health agencies;
- culture of reciprocity between providers within a community;
- trust between service providers and communities;
- regular, reliable, adequately resourced outreach services to smaller communities;
- a critical mass of appropriately qualified staff and resources;
- ability to deliver holistic care that is flexible and able to meet local needs;
- shared infrastructure;
- realistic operational budgets;
- investment in retention packages;
- provision of supervision and professional development for staff;
- supporting trainees, providing transition to work programs;
- recruitment pipelines; and
- flexible work conditions" (2008, p. 10).

Furthermore, in regional and remote settings successive reports reiterate the importance of community support for initiatives. For example in its *Independent Review of Policing in Remote Indigenous Communities in the Northern Territory*, the Allen Consulting Group reported that there was strong support from community members for effective night patrols and safe houses as ways to help improve community safety (ACG, 2010, p. 44).

Responding to family and domestic violence outside urban areas

Looking more closely at service responses to domestic and family violence in regional areas, Edwards reviewed 63 studies (mostly located in the US). She concludes that there are not so much variations in rates of intimate partner violence but that the degree of severity of harm and impact on victims is greater in rural areas compared with urban/suburban, primarily because of issues like lack of services or reduced accessibility. She also states that research also demonstrates that intimate partner violence services in rural locales are generally less well funded and comprehensive than in urban locales (Edwards, 2014).[32]

In terms of responses to domestic violence in rural and remote Australia, a review of the literature (WESNET, 2000) affirmed these and several other important issues including that:

- small communities are unlikely to have specialist domestic violence services;
- interventions may not be viable or appropriate in rural and remote locations; and
- Indigenous women and their children in particular face specific barriers accessing police, legal services and other services and assistance.

What is the current configuration of these services throughout regional and remote Australia? Some such as shelters, courts and hospitals, are most likely to be in regional centres while clinics, police and schools are the core services resident in remote Indigenous communities. "Outreach" thus takes on a different meaning when it has to cover large regional areas especially when traversing across jurisdictional boundaries. Under what is commonly referred to as hub-and-spoke model of service delivery,[33] regular visits may or may not coincide with other service activities and visitors. An example, arguably, of a "coordinated visit" by multiple service providers to the same places at the same time is the number of different service providers that follow the "bush" court circuits.

32 Edwards' (2014) recommendations for future research include the inclusion of explanatory variables to help contextualize differences detected in intimate partner violence across locales as well as more comprehensive assessment of community-level variables.

33 The East Kimberly Family Violence Hub and Outreach Service is one such example (WA DCP & FaHCSIA, 2012).

Impact of government agendas

Wherever located, none of these developments in service delivery – from the grassroots, to community controlled, to large human service NGOs, to structures delivering core government services – can ignore the impact of government agendas. Many of the "bottom-up" evolutions and developments in service approach and direction discussed earlier in this part of the literature review are organic. But they have become increasingly highly influenced by governments. Indeed, it may not be an overstatement to say that the wide-ranging debates at community and social movement levels described earlier have been overtaken by the rapid and extensive advance of government plans in the combined areas of family and domestic violence and Indigenous service delivery.

Looking particularly at service delivery in Indigenous communities and for Indigenous people in the past decade or so, two major factors can be highlighted. First, as Limerick (2014) explains, administrative reforms in the public sector have created a shift to competitive tendering of service delivery and measurement of outputs and outcomes. Secondly and more specifically, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to two major reforms. In 2004 the *National Framework of Principles for Delivering Services to Indigenous Australia* emphasized "sharing responsibility, harnessing the mainstream (including corporate, non-government and philanthropic sectors), streamlining service delivery, establishing transparency and accountability, developing a learning framework and focusing on priority areas".[34] In 2008 COAG agreed the *National Indigenous Reform Agreement* with a new outcome focused approach tied to six high-level *Closing the Gap* targets across seven "building blocks".[35] At the same time, there was a commitment to major new funding for services and infrastructure under National Partnership Agreements. The language of these agreements stressed that there needed to be engagement with, and the participation of Indigenous communities, along with responsiveness by services to Indigenous needs. There was an emphasis on partnerships and shared responsibility between governments and communities, and on improving the coordination of service delivery across and within government (Limerick, 2014).

In a recent review on the implementation of Indigenous justice and crime programs much of this language was evident in statements about aims and expected outcomes (Putt & Yamaguchi, 2015). Under the *National Indigenous Law and Justice Framework* (2009-2015) (SCAG, 2010) there is a range of strategies and programs that seek to meet the five interrelated goals that include comprehensively addressing the justice needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and reducing their over-representation as defendants, offenders and victims; and to ensure Indigenous people feel safe and are safe. Through measures such as state-based Indigenous Justice Agreements (see Allison & Cunneen, 2013); funding streams for Indigenous programs, recruitment and training policies; consultation and engagement strategies; and monitoring and review, a number of core elements emerge as being viewed as critical to change at all levels and across sectors. The elements were - social justice objectives; cultural appropriateness and competence; capacity building and partnerships; community engagement and local ownership (Putt & Yamaguchi, 2015). As these elements have become increasingly part of program design and delivery, various good practice guides and reviews have been produced - for example in relation to cultural competence (e.g. Farrelly & Carlson, 2011) and with community engagement (e.g. Hunt, 2013; Hunt, 2013b).

34 The document is located at http://www.atns.net.au/agreement.asp?EntityID=2559 [retrieved 6 June 2015]

35 One of the "building blocks" is community safety but there is no agreed high-level justice or safety target.

Evidence of change

But what difference have these commitments made on the ground? This is hard to know. Limerick (2014) makes the case that there has been insufficient focus and investment in community governance and local leadership, and a decline in Indigenous community–controlled service delivery. On the ground, he argues, there are Aboriginal health services, land management bodies and art centres which require Indigenous stewardship. Increasingly however, large NGOs win competitive tenders and it has only been strong regional Indigenous community-controlled organisations that have the capacity and effective management to successfully attract funding for service delivery.[36]

Where there is most likely to be evidence of change in services is in remote Indigenous communities, largely because of federal government funding and policy priorities. From a series of government-funded evaluations (FaHCSIA et al., 2011; FaHCSIA et al., 2013; FaHCSIA et al., 2014) of major policy and program initiatives in remote communities, three consistent findings relate to service delivery.[37]

First, the main services in small remote communities include health clinics, police, schools and various municipal services.[38] Visiting services include mental health services, child welfare services, legal and justice services, and discrete programs that may be funded in the short-term and from multiple sources. The delivery of services is typically a mix of government and non-government organisations, including regional or local Indigenous organisations. Service accessibility often depended on proximity to regional centres. Second, more services were evident in many communities[39] (often through visiting service providers) and in some instances this had created some local employment opportunities. Third, ongoing challenges with service delivery and workforce capacity and skills were raised by service providers in all the surveys, but in the NT at least issues such as staff retention, collaboration and coordination were more of a concern for town-based service providers compared with those in remote Indigenous communities (Putt et al., 2011).

Bearing in mind the focus on family and domestic violence, the evaluation of the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) is the one that is most of interest, as much of the research focused on community safety (FaHCSIA, 2011). The evaluation included a survey of more than 1,300 Aboriginal people in remote Aboriginal communities (Shaw & d'Abbs, 2011) and a survey of nearly 700 service providers in towns and communities (Putt et al., 2011). The latter survey indicated that remote service providers were more positive on a range of measures than their town counterparts, including those relating to service delivery and job satisfaction. Overall, more believed women, men, girls and old people were safe, and fewer saw a range of social problems as a big or very big problem in the community. Significantly, more were positive about the coordination of services and were more likely to say they enjoyed their work and would recommend working in the community.

Both Aboriginal residents and service providers in remote communities were concerned about children being out at night and shared the priority of more youth activities. The NTER evaluation results (FaHCSIA, 2011) suggested people believed there was less violence and fighting in some communities, and were positive about the impact of additional services, notably new/improved police stations, night patrols, additional police and safe houses. Indigenous remote community residents were more likely than service providers to perceive people as safe and nasty phone messages/chat rooms as a problem.

The lack of after-hour services was a frequent complaint in remote communities and to some extent in towns. The dominant concern of town service providers was addressing alcohol-related problems and they advocated a range of alcohol-related initiatives as well as working together more and improving the accountability of services. Other measures advocated by town service providers included increasing policing and the enforcement of law and justice measures, and the funding of organisations with a good track record.

36 This issue has also caused controversy in the family and domestic violence sector. See Summers, A. (2014). "Bleaker prospects for women fleeing domestic violence", The Sydney Morning Herald, July 26-27.

37 The evaluations involved interviews with key stakeholders, surveys of service providers and surveys and qualitative research with local Aboriginal residents, as well as extensive analysis of administrative data. There is not the space here to do justice to the range of findings related to the impact of what was being evaluated, and commonalities and discernible differences in perceptions of change and priorities for the future across different locations and between the different stakeholder groupings.

38 The evidence included the documentation of infrastructure and services (called "baseline mapping") for the 29 Indigenous communities across Australia that were part of the Remote Service Delivery initiative (FaHCSIA et al 2014) and surveys of service providers undertaken for the evaluations of the Northern Territory Emergency Response and of the Cape York Welfare Reform trial (Putt, 2013; Putt et al., 2011).

39 Given the scale and intent of the NTER, it is not surprising that more new services were established in many remote Indigenous communities in the NT, including more police facilities, night patrols, and safe houses. In other locations outside of the NT services were increased but primarily through more outreach delivery from regional hubs.

Reflecting on the service literatures

In summing up this part, over the past twenty or so years, a number of reviews of literature related to the topic of Indigenous family violence have been completed. All comment on the paucity of useful studies generally and specifically those relevant to supporting Aboriginal adult victims.

More than 10 years ago one of the first literature reviews on the topic found that literature on Aboriginal violence tends to be "top heavy with theory and discussion" (Memmott et al., 2001, p. 31; Cripps & Davis, 2012). More recently reviewing evidence on programs designed to improve interpersonal safety in Indigenous communities for the *Closing the Gap Clearinghouse,* Day and his colleagues (2013) comment that the outcome evidence is very slim. They found none in relation to victim provision and very little in relation to place-based provision. None of the 11 studies the reviewers profile address support for adult victims of violence. Looking for literature that examined proven or promising services responding to Indigenous sexual assault, McCalman and her colleagues "located program descriptions, measurement, and descriptive research, but no intervention studies" (McCalman et al., 2014, p. 1). The review searched published peer review or grey literatures. The reviewers note that, "despite public outcry, the evaluation of public health and other responses to Indigenous sexual assault is heavily under-resourced and requires investment" (McCalman et al., 2014, p. 11). Reviewing writing on the idea of "best practice", Breckenridge and Hamer (2014) discuss its slippery nature. They ask what is evidence, and what is valued in evidence. They take note of the particular importance of practice-informed evidence and research in the human services and feminist service provision in particular (Breckenridge & Hamer, 2014, p. 26).

Overwhelmingly, the literature canvassed for this review was descriptive, thematic and lacking in specificity. The problem is similar to other human service areas such as family support (Freiberg, Homel & Branch, 2014). Where there is primary research, the samples are invariably small and self-selected and provide scant information on methodology. Most evaluation studies fall into this category and tend to shy away from detailed measurement or specification of interventions and outcomes. A number of evaluation studies documented activities undertaken such as numbers of training days and number of case plans undertaken but with no data on outcomes. Studies reporting on consultations and focus groups have also cast their enquiry broadly and consequently report calls for whole-of-community, preventive and early intervention responses. Valuable as these are they leave significant issues unaddressed. They provide only little help to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal services with answers to the abiding question, "how do we know we are helping the individuals we serve?"

The next part discusses participatory methodology, its relationship to co-design and the contexts in which it has been employed. It specifically focuses on the potential and limitations of participatory methodology to reach across to some of the critiques of learning and knowing that Aboriginal scholars and activists have made of responses to violence against Aboriginal women.

Part three: Participation - Bringing Aboriginal critiques to bear on research and service developments

Participatory practices and approaches

Much of the literature on Indigenous family and domestic violence argues for the active involvement of communities in planning, developing, delivering and evaluating responses. At a basic level, inclusion builds ownership of problems as well as solutions, grows understanding and support for programs and enables fine-tuning to program delivery. Lohoar's review of child abuse prevention literature describes consultation and participatory action research as two approaches to inclusion (2012, p. 8). Participatory research has many sources. In the field of domestic violence for example, it is not so well known that the famous Duluth *Power and Control* curriculum is based on the teaching of the Brazilian community educator, Paolo Freire. Duluth's less well-known training for group work with women, *In Our Best Interest: Working with Battered Women*, similarly incorporates the radical lessons of liberating education.[40]

However, as the critical scholarly and community perspectives outlined in Part I of this review argue forcefully, inclusion "can be a valued good, it can also mean assimilation, absorption, and loss" Volpp (2015, p. 4).[41] Therefore the presumed good of inclusion needs to be considered within the context of colonisation and contemporary unequal power relations. The implications of participation properly and fully applied are "about shifting power to those with less power" (Rawsthorne, 2014, p. 9). Touching only lightly this central question of power distribution is recent government interest in co-design. This approach "is intended to extend the role of the public and invite them to contribute to the design of services". It is "more than asking for feedback or undertaking consultation or satisfaction surveys" (Lenihan & Briggs, 2011, p. 35; Lenihan, 2012). However, the focus remains a technocratic one and rests on service improvement, service standards, service accessibility, efficient resource management and streamlining of processes at a transactional level. There is also interest in refashioning relationships with the member of the public as a client; but attention is on the micro and not necessarily the institutional relationship. The "citizen-centred" approach is obviously welcome but is yet to attend to the many levels of structural imbalance of power and resources between governments and disadvantaged people and communities (or indeed with citizens in general). When powerful institutions as well as social activists laud participation, it is wise to look more closely at how it works and what it delivers.

Locations using participatory practices

In aid and development practice there has long been recognition of "the transformative potential of participation as a process" in surfacing silenced voices and submerged issues (Cornwall & Welbourn, 2002, p. 2; Hope & Timmel, 1984). There is equal recognition that the valorisation of "voice" can be window-dressing and tokenistic, and that participatory methods can smudge specificity (Campbell 2002; Overs et al., 2002). Outcomes too are not an unalloyed good. For example, the World Bank conducted a review of evidence on whether and how participatory approaches in development contribute to resource sustainability and infrastructure quality. The reviewers observe that "the people who benefit tend to be the most literate, the least geographically isolated, and the most connected to wealthy and powerful people" (Mansuri & Rao, 2013, p. 6). Amongst other things the review concludes with essential lessons on inclusion of mechanisms for "downward accountability" and deliberate effort to create and sustain local capacity.

Looking inside Australia, Foster and her co-researchers in Alice Springs describe the practical requirements to creating such capacities within the Aboriginal community. They describe the approach as researching "ourselves back to life" (Foster et al., 2006). In addition to their own energy and commitment, local researchers needed resources such as transport, space, food, water, and office support. Their description of "two-way expertise" captures a partnering of internal and external knowledge and communication styles (p. 215). Deeply embedded within the Alice Springs Town Camps as residents as well as researchers, the project paid particular attention to explaining, listening, gaining agreement and, importantly, to analysis and interpretation of findings about liquor licencing and drinking. The project results were fed back to the communities and to stakeholders in ways that

40 The curriculum is available at https://app.etapestry.com/cart/DomesticAbuseInterventionPr/default/item.php?ref=1605.0.24659291

41 Leti Volpp cites Patrick Wolfe as writing that "democracy's intolerance of difference has operated through inclusion as much as through exclusion." Patrick Wolfe, Reflections prepared for the Fifth Annual Critical Race Studies Symposium: Race and Sovereignty, UCLA School of Law, April 2011 (unpublished manuscript on file with the author). *See generally* Patrick Wolfe, Settler Colonialism and the Transformation Of Anthropology: The Politics And Poetics Of An Ethnographic Event (1999).

could be understood. The importance of crafted feedback and discussion is also discussed by Lee and colleagues in their study of cannabis use in Arnhem Land (Lee et al., 2008).[42] For this and the Alice Springs project, "seeing Aboriginal people conducting the survey in their own environment" sent a powerful message to communities (Foster et al., 2006, p. 216; Lee et al., 2008, p. 115).[43] Another project using local researchers in regions in NSW and in Queensland found that the training of local researchers was an investment for the project, the individuals and their communities. Moreover they were able to generate knowledge and understanding at a deeper level than previously held on health promotion strategies (Massey et al., 2011).

Local researchers and local partners can also provide access to pre-existing knowledges, stories, histories, perceptions and contestations around problems. Participatory research methods are especially designed "to enable local (rural or urban) people to express, enhance, share and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act" (Chambers, 1994, p. 1253). One research project explored residents' experience of violence and involved 18 low income communities across two countries. Working over long time periods with a network of local resident researchers and employing multiple participatory methods, the project uncovered previously unacknowledged inter-relationships and complexities (Moser & McIlwaine, 1999). The fundamental idea is not just building and retaining knowledge from the inside and not just identifying priorities but also being able "to determine and control that action" (Chambers, 1994, p. 1255). At their best, the methods emphasise time, relationship-building, humility, trustworthiness, sharing and sequencing. At their best, the methods calibrate with Indigenous ways of learning and knowing (Martin, 2008; Moreton-Robinson, 2000; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). At worst, participatory processes are simply another way of the powerful coming and taking from the less powerful. Power differences can be made transparent and worked with but cannot be eradicated. In the field of family and domestic violence, for example, there is an *a priori* focus on violence, already a focus on established ways of working. But not asking is not a neutral position (Howe, 2009).

Working with 12 older Canadian Aboriginal women as co-researchers in a larger health promotion project, Dickson and Green comment on precisely these issues of authority, ownership and the negative perceptions of research held by marginalised groups. Their project also revealed tension between helping and fostering self-reliance, the limits to capacity for coproduction and the reality of conflict (2001, p. 472). Like Rawsthorne's work with Aboriginal women in western Sydney, the Canadian grandmothers' project worked on different levels – personal, group, collective and institutional. Another small scale project with 6 young Aboriginal mothers in Canada, Salmon also found that participatory methods deepened analysis and understanding. Here the researcher entered with a topic she wished to examine. However, the young mothers said that government policies "don't have much to say about how we live our lives here" (Salmon, 2007, p. 986). Letting go researcher priorities ("giving away the stick") yielded a different set of concerns for the women. They devised their own pseudonyms, and drew upon their own ways of managing group dynamics to build the group experience.

The need for responsiveness to priorities and concerns of the target group was a lesson learned in two Australian research projects. One worked with 78 people from African refugee backgrounds in Perth. The pre-existing relationships between communities, key community organisations and the researcher were essential to guiding the questions, the approach and the training of community members (n=14) as researchers (Fisher, 2011, p. 120). This project sought to enable deeper engagements with African refugee communities' understanding of domestic violence, as well as to impart information about local context. This project answered the "so what" question that emerges from empowering action by planning a second phase to develop and progress interventions (p. 123). It thus emphasised the iteration of participatory processes.[44] The second project worked with Aboriginal mothers in prison. Here the researchers also stressed not just pre-existing relationships but growing the trust with key stakeholders as well as with the mothers. Trust-building helped facilitate definition and complexity to the research concepts, and was an essential first phase in a two-step process (Sherwood & Kendall, 2013).

42 Providing feedback early in the life of research was noted as important in a study with Aboriginal mothers in Canada. They had been disparaging about previous appropriation of their experience (Salmon, 2007, p. 986).

43 The research conducted by Foster and her colleagues resulted in establishment of a Research Hub within Aboriginal-controlled Tangentyere Council.

44 This type of research design can also be described as "action research" whereby problem identification is followed by problem solving then improvement and continual monitoring. An example is the evaluation of the East Kimberly Family Violence Hub and Outreach Service (December, 2012).

Participatory methods

Participatory methods encompass a huge variety of activities from theatre, to map making to music and to story-telling to name a few. Many of these derive from work with impoverished people whose literacy skills are poor but who are nonetheless rich in drama and who are intensely connected to the subject at hand. A NT project examining Aboriginal experiences and views about gambling, for example, used drawings by a local artist to depict positive and negative aspects in order to facilitate discussion on community strengths and vulnerabilities (Nagel et al., 2011). Participatory methods are engaged to map, diarise, visualise and analyse in matrix form. They can work to rank and score, to trace connections and mark trade-offs. Possibilities can be compared, modelled, refined or cast off. Essential to the process is critical self-reflection and contextualising of learning by researchers and the engaged participants whether separately and together.[45]

Although they generate intense learning, participatory methods sometimes struggle to "scale up" beyond in-depth engagements with specific projects and locations, and can inadequately quantify personal experience. Sometimes this challenge is represented as a conflict between qualitative and quantitative methods. It is certainly noted as problematic for assessing the specific activities of services. As an example in attempting to address the particular problem of measurement, Freiberg and her colleagues worked with an Australian family support provider over a two year period. They identified numerous instruments designed to measure parental outcomes, discussed these intensively with providers, developed alternatives, and discussed and refined them further still. Ultimately they developed a measure that the provider could use in their day-to-day practice and that generated data for pre and post testing (Freiberg et al., 2014). Indigenous researchers used a similarly iterative and developmental process to create an Indigenous-identified measure for wellbeing (Berry et al., 2012). These initiatives recognise that funding bodies are interested to know how particular approaches to support and empowerment "work" and how they "work" across different locations with different ingredients.

Yet equally interested are social change agents, those who network across Australia (and overseas) in their efforts to make a difference. Measuring impact and outcomes is not just a project of neo-liberalism but is fundamental to seeing rights realised and lives made better. A major project by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) has shown that it is possible to transform qualitative assessments of outcomes and impacts into quantitative analyses. Presenting the experience of poor Bangladeshi community members explaining the benefits of their grounded approach to poverty reduction - in modes and ways of their making - and developing the means to measure this over time, the researchers claim a paradigm shift (Jupp & Ali, 2010). Another study of empowerment of poor women in India similarly developed ways to quantify the interplay of themes identified by women about the services with which they were engaged (Kilby, 2011). These studies show that it is possible to marry "ground-up" participatory methods with researchers' interest in rigorous findings. Empowerment is a complex and malleable notion but self-definition is the critical starting point.

45 There are a number of resource guides on participatory methods. Many will be familiar to those in community development and group work. Some examples are Chambers, R. (2002). Participatory Workshops: a sourcebook of 21 sets of ideas and activities. Earthscan for Routledge: Abingdon; and the online resource compiled by David Archer and Kate Newman, Communication and Power (2003), for Reflect. Available at http://www.reflect-action.org/ [retrieved 26 March 2015]

Reflecting on participatory literatures

The co-production of knowledge held out by participatory approaches is an enticing goal. However, without interrogating the power and privileges of whiteness (of white researchers) and its central dominance as "normal" in the Australian context, such approaches will simply replicate expropriations (Moreton-Robinson, 2000).

There are key messages from the participation literature for such a journey. As a starting point these include:

- being critically self-aware and question motivations; practising humility and being a learner;[46]
- be honest and open about limitations and what is in and outside scope; then question motivations again;
- look forward and see what realistic possibilities there are for design, re-design or shifting ground; and
- how much, what and whose power is at stake in such futures; who, what and when may (or will) be harmed by such shifts and in what ways. How can this be avoided or mitigated?
- Perhaps most importantly, ask what "we" are trying to achieve with and for Aboriginal women.

Deeper research partnerships

The preceding sections in this review have shown how thin and fragmented is the evidence base about interventions and support for adult Aboriginal women as victims/survivors of family and domestic violence. A part explanation is the relationships between researchers and service providers. Researchers may not fully acknowledge the constraints that circumscribe community providers' involvement in research and evaluation. Over-worked, under-resourced and stretched to meet demand, most service providers rightly prioritise their frontline work. Less considered is the disquiet expressed by providers about pathologising and stereotyping assumptions that underlay the measurement instruments and surveys that many researchers come with (Bennett et al., 2004). Furthermore, services are deeply aware of the importance of listening and learning from Aboriginal women, indeed any woman (Simpson, 2003).

Services are acutely interested in figuring out "what works" in their interactions with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women as victims/survivors of family and domestic violence. They know that there is more to what they do than counting the number of phone contacts or the number of safety plans made. Many are over-burdened with reporting obligations to funding bodies, often numbers of these. Many also receive no or little funding for data collection and storage let alone for analysis. Yet they are the ones having the conversations with Aboriginal women seeking help.

However in many areas, especially in regional and remote communities, there is a high turnover of staff so it is "vital to find alternative means to document, manage, and retain the explicit and implicit knowledge within and across sectors" (McIntyre, 2003, p. 316). When government and providers design service evaluations there is little or no attention paid to ways of adding value to the evidence-base by testing and refining research methods. Researchers can quickly lose touch with the pace of change in the public policy domain and may not see the value of long-term investment in relations with community providers. Thus participatory approaches potentially work at different levels – collaboration between researchers and services, between workers and service users, and amongst services, users and with social supports. Moreover, these layers work over time and in iterative engagements across, up and down. Finding what to measure means finding what is important. This is a learning enquiry.

Participatory approaches hold at least some promise for listening, learning and acting within collaborations between researchers, providers, service users and communities.

46 Chambers provides a solid critical list of preparatory questions (2002, pp. 10-130).

Appendix A: Literature search strategies

Aboriginal scholars have been persistent in their critique of the dominant positivist paradigm in much western research traditions. Questions about the nature of "evidence" are underpinned by radical distinctions in ontology and epistemology. Literature reviews are an orthodox approach to validating and situating what is accepted as knowledge. Yet topic searches relevant to the public policy domain tend to privilege precisely those approaches to evidence and knowledge that require "objectivity" and quantitative data. Similarly, much that is relevant to the liminal space of community/organisational interactions is located elsewhere than academic journals and scholarly databases.

Therefore, a combination of strategies were undertaken that were particularly suited to this examination of the literature. In the first instance, there was not a single topic to pursue such as "domestic violence"; even with the additional "Indigenous" refinement. The approach was to substantively search the primary topic of Indigenous family and domestic violence, then refine to focus on Aboriginal women, victims/survivors; and then to "slice" into key areas being:

- the domestic violence (or "battered women's") movement;
- feminism and Aboriginal women; and
- women's and feminist services.

A further targeted search of regional and remote service delivery was undertaken and thematic analysis of literature on participatory methodology. This latter body of work is enormous so only key selected texts were sampled.

The search strategy adopted for this literature review proceeded in a number of steps comprising database searches, internet and sector searches for grey literature (including enquiries through networks and contacts), detailed cross-analysis of first author publications (including other related literature reviews), and consideration of key texts.

Database searches

Both Griffith University and the University of New England use search engines that do topic search across catalogues without targeting specific databases. An initial search began with "domestic violence" AND "movement" and yielded 228 results. Adding a key word search "Australia" refined the selection to 182 items. A scan of titles and abstracts reduced the sample further. These then were grouped into Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal authors with most attention given to the former. Following particular debates, the search targeted Australian Feminist Studies most read articles and most cited articles; and the Indigenous Law Bulletin using the search term "family violence".

Subject databases consulted using a combination of search terms including "domestic violence, "family violence" and "Indigenous":

- Indigenous Justice Clearinghouse;
- Victims of Crime Clearinghouse;
- Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, Safe Communities node;
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare publications node; and
- Australian Institute of Criminology publications node.

A number of these sites generated other literature reviews covering related subject matters. These were mined for cross-analysis of references (see below). The next stage of the search examined those items generated in this first sweep and selecting studies that involved primary research, evaluation or consultation with Aboriginal women and/or Aboriginal community members and/or workers. Again, these focused on articles addressing family and domestic violence subject matter and especially those attending to Aboriginal women as victims/survivors.

A further database sweep added "participatory action research" to the topic slices.

Grey literature searches

From previous work, the reviewers already had libraries of localised studies, large scale jurisdictional reviews, and other service literature.

Sector searches included contact with peak bodies and their websites. Contact was made with WESNET who provided member details in the states and territories. Each received an email asking about any studies or evaluations of services for Aboriginal women. One responded saying they had nothing but would pass on to other services in the state; another said they would look but did not provide anything further; and a third provided a pamphlet for clients outlining their services. A further sector search enquired of generic victim services whether they had undertaken evaluations or consultations with Aboriginal clients.

Cross-analysis of references

Cross-analysis was conducted of the references contained in journal articles, government and other specialist enquiry reports (law reform commissions and task forces for example), and local evaluation studies and consultations. Items that focussed on Aboriginal women and family violence, and that contained primary data collection were then sourced and examined for this review.

Key text analysis

Finally, key texts such as monographs and books were identified and read for this review. Key texts included critical Aboriginal writing, foundational sources on participatory action research, and on "the battered women's movements".

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