

“It’s good to know each other, to be Kungas”

**An interim evaluation report for the
Kunga Stopping Violence Program
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North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency Ltd

Dr Heather Anderson

School of Humanities, Languages and Social Sciences

Griffith University

h.anderson@griffith.edu.au

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is an interim evaluation report produced on behalf of the Kunga Stopping Violence Program (KVSP), a throughcare program supporting Aboriginal women who have been incarcerated in the Alice Springs Correctional Centre for an alleged violent offence. It outlines the initial findings of a broader ‘qualitative creative evaluation project’ that has been postponed due to the extraordinary effects of the global Covid-19 epidemic.

The evaluation employed traditional ethnographic methods and is based on interviews conducted in February 2020 with KVSP clients (Kunga women), staff, stakeholders/service providers whose work intersects with the Kunga Stopping Violence Program, as well as participatory observation, and non-confidential documents and published reports. The findings also draw upon radio packages produced with Kunga women incarcerated in the Alice Springs Correctional Centre in 2018.

The data analysis revealed eight key themes:

- KSVP’s staff are a significant strength to the program
- Local staff are valued more than professional qualifications
- KSVP emphasise a flexible client-focused and compassionate approach
- KSVP provide effective trauma-informed training inside prison
- Systems are in place to support staff mental health and wellbeing
- Staff employ a range of effective techniques to communicate with clients
- The low-profile of the organisation works to its benefit
- While not an ideal situation, KSVP has the resilience to continue its services remotely during times of crisis (Covid-19 response)

There is significant evidence to demonstrate that the Kunga Stopping Violence Program is well-regarded in the Mparntwe/Alice Springs community, and provides invaluable support to the women and families it works alongside. The evaluation also identified future directions the Kunga Stopping Violence Program could pursue, if additional resources were made available to the organisation. These include:

- Additional programs for its clients, especially focusing on parenting and child safety.
- Additional staff

- Provision of safe and secure housing
- Assisting service providers that provide legal support to women accused of violent acts of self-defence
- Closer collaboration with local service providers who work with young women and women at risk of/exposed to domestic and family violence.

The Kunga program we're doing in prison is – helps us to look forward to see how, how [the] future will be [when we] get out of this prison. And Kunga program helps us to choose, we have a choice to make of who we are ... choosing to be with friends and family and staying strong, because violence is not part of our culture and it's never meant to be in our life, our life story.

INTRODUCTION

We all got different languages but we understand each other and we respecting each other in this class. And it's good to know each other, to be Kungas.

The Kunga Stopping Violence Program (KSVP) based in Mparntwe/Alice Springs is a throughcare program supporting Aboriginal women who have been incarcerated in the Alice Springs Correctional Centre for an alleged violent offence. It is a subset of a wider throughcare program operated by the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) across the Northern Territory. 'Throughcare' is defined by NAAJA as the coordinated provision of support, beginning when a person first enters prison and continuing until they are living a 'safe, fulfilling and trouble-free life back out in the community'¹.

The Kunga Stopping Violence Program runs a four-week violence-prevention course in the prison twice a year. Participation is voluntary, and clients (also referred to as Kunga women in this report) are visited regularly by case managers and assisted to plan and prepare for their release from prison. Upon release, KSVP continues to provide support for at least twelve months in the form of (but not limited to) home visits, referrals, social programs, a drop in space at the KSVP office and mentoring.

This report is an interim document, based on an evaluation project disrupted by the extraordinary effects of the global Covid-19 epidemic. The author, Dr Heather Anderson, a Senior Lecturer with the School of Humanities, Languages and Social Science at Griffith University, Meanjin/Brisbane, has been commissioned to conduct a 'qualitative creative evaluation project' with the Kunga Stopping Violence Program in 2020. The ongoing project invites Kunga women to explore their experiences of the service through storytelling and hands-on audio production training. The intended outputs are a series of audio packages suitable for broadcast online and through traditional radio outlets. A written evaluation, based on data gathered during activities wrapped around the audio production workshops, will accompany the audio packages. Participants will develop new, or enhanced, audio production and storytelling techniques and strengthen their communication skills. Participants will also directly contribute to the improvement of KSVP services by providing invaluable feedback

¹ <https://www.naaja.org.au/our-programs/throughcare/>

based on their own lived experiences of the program. The current project builds on a previous visit to KSVP in 2018, where the author recorded and produced a series of audio packages with Kunga women at the Alice Springs Correctional Centre (during an iteration of the prison course).

The author initiated the evaluation project with a five day visit to Mparntwe/Alice Springs in February 2020, conducting a number of interviews with staff and clients during that time. Unfortunately, the project has been unable to advance due to Covid-19 restrictions. In consultation with KSVP's program manager, it was decided to draw on the initial interviews, and other qualitative data to produce this interim report; it is, by no means, complete. At the time of writing, the Northern Territory borders have been tentatively opened to some interstate travel and the Kunga Stopping Violence Program is beginning to work face-to-face with their clients again, both inside and outside of prison. Plans are being made to recommence the project, as soon as it is possible to safely travel between Queensland and the Northern Territory.

A note needs to be made regarding language employed in this document. The acronym, KSVP, is regularly used as an abbreviation for the Kunga Stopping Violence Program. KSVP staff are referred to collectively as 'staff' or 'team', however, 'case manager' and 'program manager' are used when appropriate. The term 'client' is used interchangeably with 'Kunga² women', aligning with the language employed at the Kunga Stopping Violence Program. The women KSVP work alongside are certainly much more than 'clients' or 'prisoners': they are resilient mothers, sisters, aunties, nieces, daughters, grandmothers, wives, partners and friends.

I, the author, acknowledge the Traditional Owners of this colonised land now known as Australia, and recognise that sovereignty has never been ceded. This project is being conducted on the lands of the Arrnte (Mparntwe - Alice Springs), Turrbul and the Jagera people (Meanjin - Brisbane). I pay my respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past, present and emerging, and commit to standing and working alongside First Nations people. I condemn the vast overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait

² Kunga is derived from 'kungka', a word from the Pitjantjatjara language of the Central Desert, meaning woman, or more specifically young woman.

Islander people in Australia's prison industrial complex and the ongoing trauma imposed by systemic racism and colonisation.

I thank the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency for the opportunity to conduct this project. Most importantly, I extend my sincere and heartfelt thanks to the KSVP staff, and the Kunga women they work alongside, for welcoming me into their program and sharing their stories with me over the past two years. I look forward to many more visits.

METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the methods used to collect and analyse the data that informed the evaluation. As mentioned, this report is an interim document, based on an evaluation project that is postponed due to Covid-19 disruptions.

Background

Dr Heather Anderson is a media studies academic and community radio practitioner, specialising in prisoner radio research and practice³. A shared aspiration to collaborate with KSVP's program manager emerged when both presented papers at The Reintegration Puzzle Conference, an initiative of Deakin University. This was followed up in 2018, when Dr Anderson spent a week in Mparntwe/Alice Springs. During this visit, she accompanied KSVP staff to the Alice Springs Correctional Centre to observe delivery of the prison course, and to produce a series of radio packages⁴ with the Kunga women for broadcast on Radio Seeds, a prisoner radio show in Adelaide (Kaurna land).

In 2020, the Kunga Stopping Violence Program (through NAAJA) commissioned the author to develop and conduct a 'qualitative creative evaluation project', alongside Kunga women, to explore their experiences of the service through storytelling and hands-on audio production training. As part of project, participants will actively contribute to the improvement of KSVP services by providing invaluable feedback based on their own experiences of the program. They will have the opportunity to develop new, or enhanced, audio production and storytelling techniques and strengthen their communication skills. The intended outputs of the evaluation project are a series of audio packages suitable for broadcast (online and through traditional radio outlets) accompanied by a written evaluation of the Kunga Stopping

³ See, for example, Anderson, Heather 2012, *Raising the Civil Dead: Prisoners and community radio*, Peter Lang AG, Switzerland; Anderson, Heather and Bedford, Charlotte 2017, "Mobilong Prison Radio pilot: final report", University of South Australia, <http://apo.org.au/node/115686>

⁴ <https://radioseeds.wordpress.com/2018/04/07/welcome-to-the-kunga-stopping-violence-program/>;
<https://soundcloud.com/drheatheranderson/kungas-messages>;
<https://radioseeds.wordpress.com/2018/05/05/art-and-healing-at-the-alice-springs-correctional-centre/>

Violence Program based on data gathered during activities wrapped around the audio production workshops.

The full evaluation project is on hold due to Covid-19 disruptions.

Data collection and analysis

This interim report is based on data collected using traditional ethnographic methods, including participant observation, document analysis and interviews. The author employed an inductive approach, where patterns, consistencies and similarities in experience are observed in order to reach conclusions⁵.

The author spent five days with the Kunga Stopping Violence Program in February, 2020. The purpose of this visit was to immerse herself in the work environment, spend time with staff, meet clients (outside and inside Alice Springs Correctional Centre) and make preparations for the main workshops which were scheduled for March (Jurnkkurakurr/Tennant Creek) and June (Mparntwe/Alice Springs). The visit coincided with KSVP's fifth birthday celebrations and the launch of the *Kungas' trauma experiences and effects on behavior in Central Australia* report⁶, commissioned by Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS).

Nine formal interviews were conducted during this time period, with the following participants (face to face unless indicated otherwise):

- Four Kunga women at Alice Springs Correctional Centre
- One Kunga woman attending birthday celebrations
- One Kunga woman at Darwin Correctional Centre (via telephone)
- Three case managers

A written survey was designed to target people visiting the KSVP office, however, only one person completed it before Covid-19 disruptions limited distribution. The author was also

⁵ Goddard, W. & Melville, S. (2004) "Research Methodology: An Introduction" 2nd edition, Blackwell Publishing

⁶ Bevis, M., Atkinson, J., McCarty, L., & Sweet, M. (2020). *Kunga's trauma experiences and effects on behaviour in Central Australia* (Research report, 03/2020). Sydney, NSW: ANROWS.

given access to non-confidential documents including annual reports, grant acquittals and diaries that logged the number of visits to the office and phone calls taken by staff.

With the main component of this evaluation project postponed, the author extended her data collection and spoke to stakeholders and service providers whose work intersected with that of KSVP, many of whom had attended the launch of the ANROWS report mentioned above. An additional six interviews were conducted with service providers from the following organisations:

- Central Australia Health Service
- Women's Safety Services of Central Australia
- NT Shelter
- Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council
- Department of the Attorney-General and Justice
- North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency.

In April 2020, interviews were conducted via Zoom with three Kunga Stopping Violence Program staff (two case managers and the program manager) to explore the effects of Covid-19 disruption to KSVP services, staff and clients. A Zoom interview was also conducted with Professor Judy Atkinson from We Al-li⁷. Professor Atkinson developed the four-week prison course delivered by KSVP, and continues to work closely with the service. Although not a staff member, Professor Atkinson is regarded as part of the organisation, and is considered a stakeholder for the purposes of this report.

One final set of audio recordings was included in the data analysis - the radio packages produced by Dr Anderson with Kunga women at Alice Springs Correctional Centre in 2018. This audio is publicly available, and its inclusion allowed for a wider range of perspectives from the women central to the evaluation.

The interviews and radio packages were transcribed and analysed using discourse analysis. The data analysis identified a number of themes that collectively articulated participants' experiences with, and opinions of, the Kunga Stopping Violence Program. These themes

⁷ While the author and Professor Atkinson were both in Mparntwe/Alice Springs in February 2020, an interview was overlooked, mostly due to time restrictions.

were identified through closely reading and re-reading the interview data to tease out ‘patterns across different people’s talk, particular images, metaphors and figures of speech’⁸. NVivo software was also used to create ‘word clouds’ based on the most commonly used words and phrases appearing in the transcripts.

⁸ Edley, N. (2001). Analysing masculinity: Interpretative repertoires, ideological dilemmas and subject positions. In M. Wetherell, S. Taylor, & S. J. Yates (Eds.), *Discourse as data. A guide for analysts* (pp. 189–228). London: Sage.

FINDINGS

Section One: Strengths of the Kunga Stopping Violence Program

Introduction

The Kunga Stopping Violence Program is a well-respected throughcare service provider for Aboriginal women incarcerated for alleged violent offences in the Alice Springs Correctional Centre. Interviews with Kunga clients, staff and other relevant stakeholders - mostly service providers working with Aboriginal women, men and families across the Northern Territory - revealed a set of key themes that identify, describe and explain the strengths of the organisation and its potential expansion.

The following quotes capture the essence of the Kunga Stopping Violence Program, and the attitudes of its staff and clients towards the service. The first is from a Kunga woman (or client) interviewed during KSVP's fifth birthday celebrations. The second quote is from one of the organisation's case managers.

These ladies, they like to help other women ... When they move into a new house ... Or when they want to do shopping, income statements, and all that. These women [indicating to the celebrations], they are all the clients of the program at the prison, done with these ladies – the Kunga program.

Whatever the women need help with ... we do it.

These simple statements encapsulate the key findings of this report.

KSVP's staff are a significant strength to the program

The Kunga Stopping Violence Program team comprises four full-time staff: a program manager and three case managers, the latter being local Aboriginal women. All are based at the KSVP office in Mparntwe/Alice Springs. One case manager also travels on regularly to work with clients at Jurnkkurakurr/Tennant Creek; other remote communities in Central Australia are visited by team members as required. Across the evaluation period, every staff

member expressed their approval of the current model of operations that ‘worked well with the ladies (clients)’, and job satisfaction is clear.

The KSVP team (case managers and program manager) are key to the overall success of the program, and this is evident from speaking with clients, stakeholders, other service providers and the staff themselves. Staff members are confident in their own capabilities, and the quality of support they provide to clients. They are also fully cognisant of the benefits they bring to the women with whom they work and acknowledge in return the significant trust clients place in KSVP, both inside and outside the prison environment.

What do I think I bring? Safety, I think the ladies feel safe – safe when they’re here with me, talking to me and come to see me, they feel safe. Sometimes happiness, yeah ... They know they can rely on me.

I think everything that we do works well with the ladies ... I think everything works – they just love us, yeah, the women.

This confidence extends to the delivery of KSVP’s four-week prison course, which is one of the first points of contact between the service and new clients. This ‘intensive trauma-specific, violence-prevention educational package’⁹ was initially developed and delivered by Professor Judy Atkinson from We Al-li, in consultation with KSVP’s program manager. Later iterations of the training package were delivered by Professor Atkinson alongside KSVP staff, and the author of this report attended one of these in February 2018 (for a few days and in a separate capacity). At this time, Professor Atkinson led the course activities and there was speculation regarding when, and if, local staff would have the capacity and/or confidence to deliver the program independently. In 2019, however, both iterations of the prison course were successfully delivered by local staff.

I think she’s [Judy] been with us for so long where we’ve gotten her groove and she’s done our booklet, so it pretty much just runs authentically, it just flows. A few things we get stuck on but ... it goes pretty well now.

⁹ Bevis, M., Atkinson, J., McCarty, L., & Sweet, M. (2020). Kunga’s trauma experiences and effects on behaviour in Central Australia (Research report, 03/2020). Sydney, NSW: ANROWS, p.2.

Another asset of the KSVP team is the demonstrable sense of comradery between the staff members. This is particularly important for mental health care, as discussed in a later section. A high level of respect is held for one another's work ethic and capabilities, and staff easily described what they felt each member brought professionally to the team.

[One of the Case managers] is really hard-working with her clients and she makes sure that her clients have good things prepared for them.

You can see [another Case manager] really wants to help them as, she wants to go above and beyond and she's just, I just think she's really good at her job.

It's pretty smooth. And I think what's strongest with our team is we all communicate really well, we're all really organised with what everyone's doing ... [Our program manager] really helps, she's really organised.

Confidence in KSVP extends outside the organisation. The service is highly regarded in the Mparntwe/Alice Springs community, as reported by all of the stakeholder groups interviewed for this evaluation.

I think they are seen, certainly by other stakeholders at that practice and management level, as reputable ... So, I think their reputation is great. I haven't heard otherwise. I probably am not speaking from the on the ground perspective though, and I haven't heard anything to the contrary, which I'm sure I would have if there were any issues.

It's the only program that does this work, and I think it's incredibly valuable, and I think everybody agrees that it is incredibly valuable.

One service provider, when setting up a new program of their own, explained that KSVP's approach to case management was considered an aspirational model.

The way that the Kunga program was talked about was within such a positive light ... it came more from knowledge around how they particularly work as a

team ... a woman may be a client, specifically of one case worker, but actually, the whole team has a relationship with that woman, and that's something that was spoken about quite a lot as I was starting, to consider how we wanted to set up, as a team ... it's not this sort of individualised response, because that's also not what works within a community framework, as well.

Many of the comments from stakeholder groups highlighted positive personal and professional qualities of the KSVP staff. Similarly, when asked for their overall assessment of the throughcare service, clients and former clients tended to focus on the virtues of the staff.

They are really, really supportive people and yeah they just make me feel really happy (Kunga woman).

They're responsive, and kind, and caring, and nurturing in that space of the women that they're working alongside (service provider).

Our interactions alongside their team through training, and through meetings and stuff, have all been really beautiful, and they've got such a, I guess, warm and welcoming nature within the team that my sense is that women [clients] experience that, working alongside them as well (service provider).

Local staff are valued more than professional qualifications

Employing a team of local Aboriginal case managers is also paramount to the success of the program. Again, this was recognised by both Kunga women and service providers in the Mparntwe/Alice Springs area. One woman at the Alice Springs Correctional Centre said she felt the KSVP case managers understood her experiences because of their cultural and community connections.

Yeah, they're teaching us to be ... respectful and ... keep on going with our cultures and all that, not to lose it and especially about the violence thing because I've been in a rough marriage for, I don't know how many years. Man, he made my face all bugged up. That was really scary. Yeah, we talk about

violence too, that's very good, making me feel better ... She knows everything about you, what's been going through in your head and what you've been going through with your husband and all that ... the way they explain it is like they just know what's going on in your head with your worrying and being in a violence marriage for too long.

This was reiterated by stakeholder organisations.

...there's some amazing strong Aboriginal women in that team ... there's only so much I can do in that space, and I think that their understanding of [one of the interviewee's clients, and her experiences, would be far more advanced in that way

There's just multiple layers of understanding that somebody coming in from outside, you won't understand, and you can never understand it. It's not something you can learn. You can ... learn to an extent, but there's a whole lot of nuanced aspects of the way that people are within relationships, and families, and communities that you're not ever going to be able to get through learning [in a more Western way of having a degree in something. Having people from community, in where the work is happening and where those women are situated, and how they're living their lives is, I think, is so important.

Without Aboriginal people included in programs and services across the board, the outcome can be quite different ... in terms of prioritising their safety I guess. And just feeling comfortable with their own people working in those environments.

Likewise, staff at KSVP recognise the importance of retaining a local Aboriginal case management team. The following exchange, between two case managers, clearly demonstrates the importance of community and cultural connection and how relationships are fostered between case managers and clients.

How we work and talk to our clients, it gets them more motivated to do things ... we talk to them like we're family, so it's just, 'you need to do this because this is going to happen if you don't'.

Yeah, we're willing to give them the hard word.

Hard love, tough love to get good outcomes out of it and they do listen. But first, we've got to build that relationship, they know who we are and our backgrounds and how we're all connected ... So we start making our connections through, I guess, family and friends and then they start trusting us and then we can start getting them to open up and then we'll give them that tough love.

When asked what criteria they thought should be considered when hiring new staff, case managers responded that professional or academic qualifications are not as important to their job as lived experience, community connection and the capacity to care for the lives of the Kunga women.

I reckon they need to be local, Indigenous, female. They have to have some sort of background knowledge, some sort of work ethic.

I think just someone with their hearts in the job because ... what you see and what you hear from the ladies, you've got to have the heart, I think, and I don't know about the qualifications, I mean, it's just, ... I can't think of that word that we would use, but be there for the ladies, don't just come in and be halfhearted about it because it's ... tough – what we see and hear is really, really tough sometimes.

All of the case managers, however, expressed a desire to pursue further study and felt encouraged to do so by KSVP's program manager. One case manager recently completed a Graduate Certificate in Indigenous Trauma Recover with the University of Wollongong and at the time of writing, staff are participating in First Steps in Family Work Skills training, conducted by the Bouvierie Centre Indigenous Programs with La Trobe University. Two case managers are enrolled in the Batchelor Institute's Preparation for Tertiary Success, a university preparation program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Both plan to continue their studies with a Diploma in Counselling, followed by a Bachelor of Social

Work. However, this was considered to be more a future investment than a requirement for their current position at KSVP.

I think it's for us later on, in case something happens to Kungas. We have something to back us up for jobs because we notice that most jobs around town you need qualifications.

Another staff member was particularly keen to study counselling, as she believed she had the 'heart' for it.

I'd like to do counselling because I'm pretty good – I know, I've just got that heart, it's just in me So yeah, I always say that but I just haven't got around to doing it.

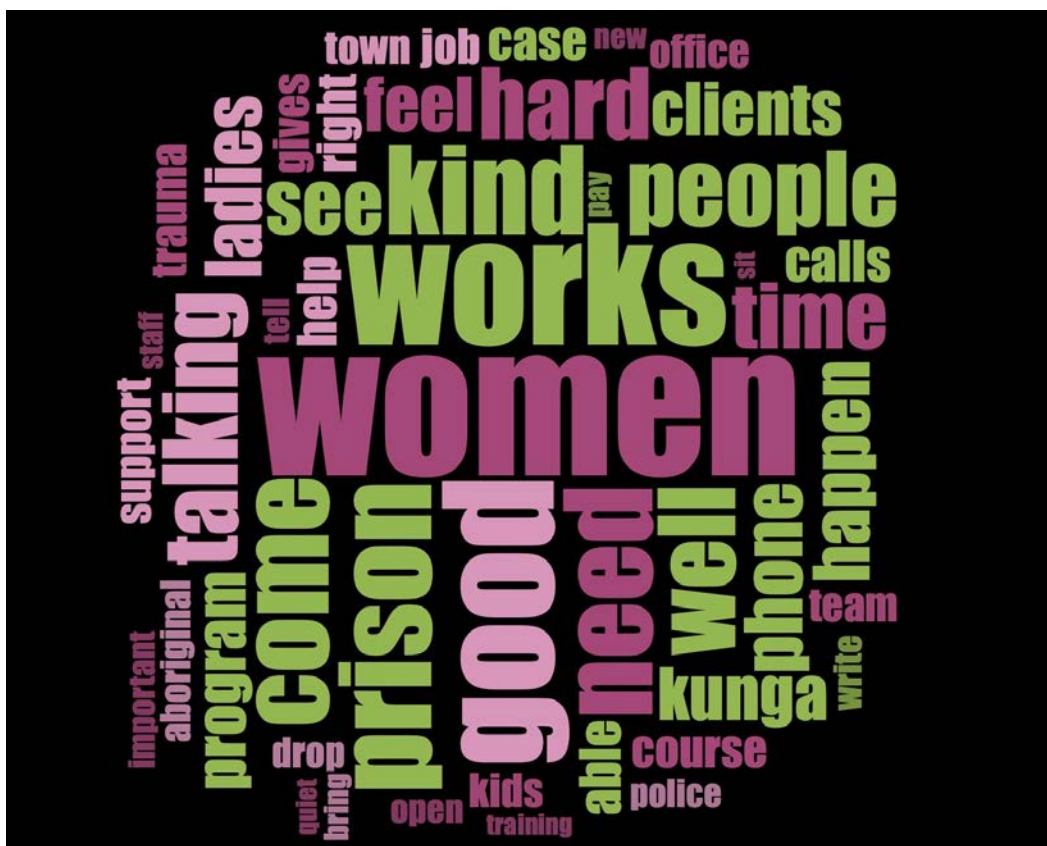
Staff also stated they were given ample training opportunities within the context of their employment, which they 'jump to at every chance'. Such training includes:

- Mental Health First Aid
- First Aid, St Johns Ambulance Australia
- Working with translators with the Interpreter Service
- Cultural awareness with local elders

A stakeholder with strong affiliations to the Kunga Stopping Violence Program identified the value of ongoing training and skills development, not only for local Aboriginal staff at KSVP but for service providers across Central Australia.

Because we saw a lack of assessment of the trauma that the women are living with, and a lack of capacity to counsel the women in deep ways ... So part of what I think needs to happen is that we need to be involved in skilling up a local Indigenous, a local Aboriginal workforce, because they do have a commitment to deepening their skills and working in a better way.

Figure One: Staff interviews word cloud



KSVP emphasise a flexible client-focused and compassionate approach

It is evident that the KSVP team take a very client-focused approach to their work, as described here by a key stakeholder who works closely with the organisation.

In the Kunga office ... I see it every time I go there, the capacity for women in crisis to pop in even after they come out of prison and things aren't going really well, and housing is not good and the services aren't there. and they're still locked into the cycle of violence ... But [staff just accept them for who they are.

Plenty of anecdotes shared by KSVP staff demonstrate their dedication and willingness to go above and beyond expectations in order to ensure the safety of and support for the women with whom they work. In this example, one case manager is discussing how the team

responded to concerns that a client had been assaulted by her partner, the day after she had met with them at the office.

We've heard through the grapevine and then we go and suss them out ... or we 'just happen' to look on the court list and we see his name on the court list, well we know definitely something's happened, so we'll go and check her out.

Similarly, when asked what constitutes a 'good day at the office', all of the case managers answered with scenarios that focus on client success.

When clients almost get their housing, that's a good day. When clients have their babies, that's a good day!

When they finish their rehab, that's a good day!

And when they're released and they walk through the doors and it's 'Oh my god, you're out'! And they give us big hugs because they're so happy.

A key aspect to the KSVP team's individualised client-focused approach is the willingness to be flexible. One way this has benefited the program is through the development of the four-week prison course, which has been adapted over the years in response to the needs of the Kunga women, and as facilitation responsibilities passed from Professor Atkinson to local staff members.

I think that there seems to be a really strong sense of flexibility with the Kunga program where they haven't got one particular format that they use with all of the different work that they do ... like the program that's delivered in the prison and for the other work that they do to be really flexible and to be changed, it allows for that opportunity to be able to reflect on what you're doing and to learn from the women and to change the program, I think that that works really well (Stakeholder).

The value of flexibility is clearly demonstrated in the case of one Kunga woman, who was transferred from Alice Springs Correctional Centre to Darwin Correctional Centre, technically outside of KSVP's catchment area. However, the client was kept 'on the books'

and she telephones the office regularly as a way to manage her own health and well-being. The value of this long-distance relationship is clear.

Even when I am here now in Darwin Prison I still call them because sometimes I feel a bit lonely or sometimes I stress – I just call them and it makes me feel better even when I am here and [just talking to them.

Q: Do you know why it makes you feel better?

Because it's really helpful – they talk things through with me ... because last time I called from here a couple of months ago and I had a bit of problem here and then I called Kunga up, and then [case managers were talking to me and making me feel good ... I still do call Kunga every now and then if I want to, ... sometimes the stress of feeling lonely because all my family is back in Alice Springs ... If I return back to Alice Springs, I would like to work with someone from Kunga ... to do some programs with them ... if they ask me to do it, I can do it.

As demonstrated in the quotes above, there are strong relationships of trust developed between the KSVP staff and the women they work alongside. This is incredibly important. Recent research initiated by KSVP identified the majority of Aboriginal women incarcerated for violent crime have experienced, and continue to experience, complex trauma in their lives. As a result, many of the Kunga women often feel unsafe and return, post-release, to ‘fractured mother-child, family and community relationships’¹⁰.

Many of the Kunga women indicated a strong dependence on KSVP in lieu of other reliable support networks. They clearly trusted the staff to provide them with the help they required, while incarcerated and post-release.

I have got family there that can help, but it's not – they are not really helping, but Kunga they could – they listen to you and they sit there and talk to you ... and, yeah, that's why I would like them to work with me and I would like to work with them.

¹⁰ Bevis, M., Atkinson, J., McCarty, L., & Sweet, M. (2020). Kunga's trauma experiences and effects on behaviour in Central Australia (Research report, 03/2020). Sydney, NSW: ANROWS, p.5

I keep coming back in, and [the only people that I rely is just Kunga.

I thought I had no support whatsoever ... no one who could help me get through this one So it's good to have them, to know them and to work with them.

They give me a number if I go back to my community, if I've got something wrong with my community I call them, contact them and they can help me.

The KSVP staff indicated they were aware of the strength and importance of their relationships with the Kunga women.

I think because we have very strong relationships with our clients ... they tend to contact us a lot.

Some of them can really depend on us – if we think that they're quite capable of doing things on their own, well we encourage it, but the other ones need a bit more.

When asked why they thought they were able to develop strong, trusting relationships with their clients, KSVP staff highlighted the value of listening. While not explicitly referred to by participants in this evaluation project, this emphasis on the act of listening connects to the concept of Dadirri, 'a deep listening process from the Ngangikurungkurr language of the Daly River region, Northern Territory'¹¹. A practice utilised by Professor Judy Atkinson in her research, Dadirri is considered 'a special quality, a unique gift of the Aboriginal people'¹².

We listen. A lot of women don't have that opportunity ... for someone to listen to them.

People can just sit and talk and I listen

¹¹ Bevis, M., Atkinson, J., McCarty, L., & Sweet, M. (2020). Kunga's trauma experiences and effects on behaviours in Central Australia (Research report, 03/2020). Sydney, NSW: ANROWS, p.20

¹² Ungunmerr-Baumann (1988) in *ibid*.

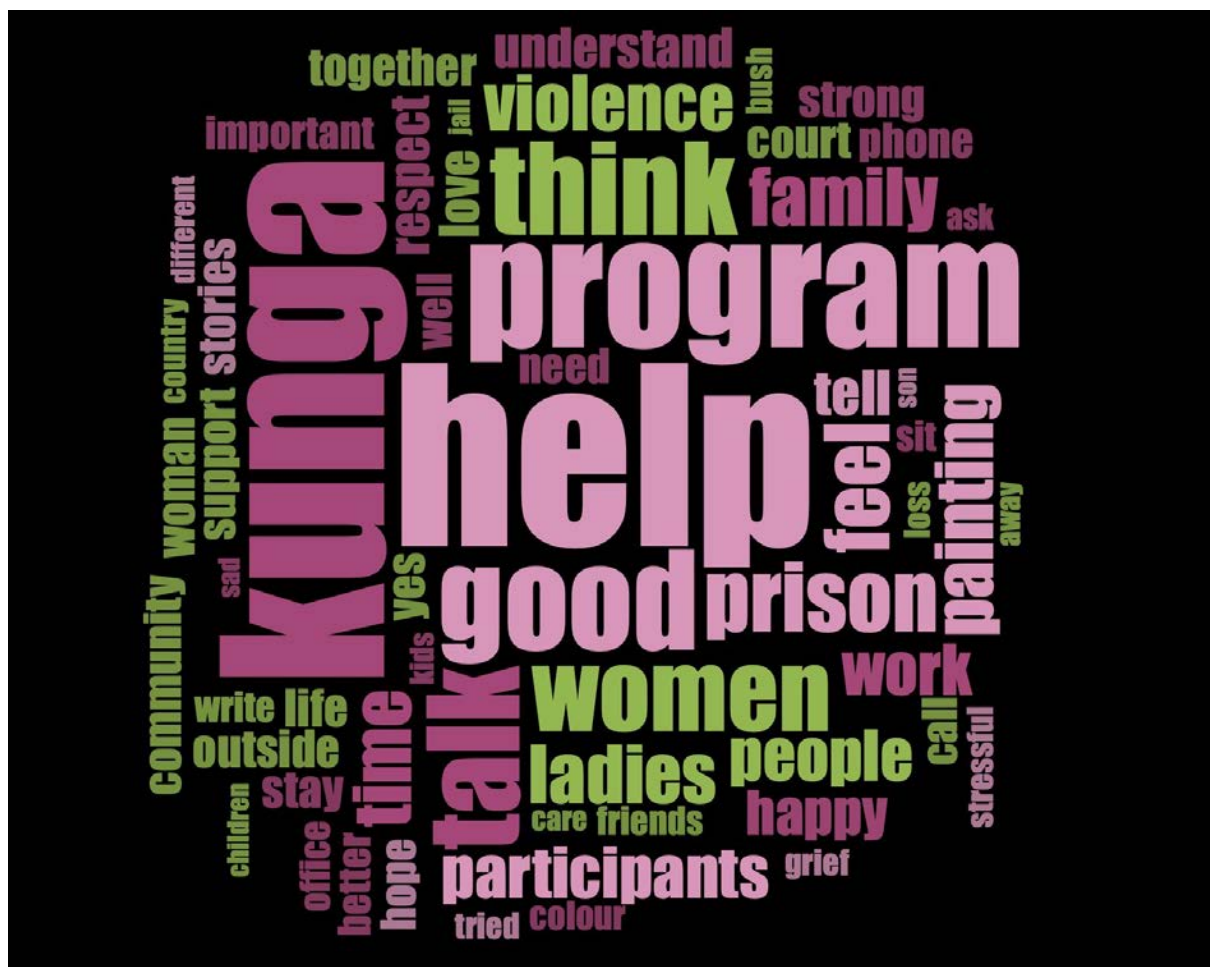
Kunga women in the Alice Springs Correctional Centre also emphasised the value of being listened to, and of being heard.

And give us time to have a chat too, talk about things ... if we're feeling bad or something, worried about something, they're pretty good these ladies – the Kunga Program ladies.

I think what's more important about Kunga is that it's confidential and we trust the Kungas because they listen to what we have to say.

It's good talking to them on the phone, make you feel calm and not worried about anything. If you hear something at the community, it's good talking to them.

Figure Two: Kunga women interviews word cloud



KSVP provides effective trauma-informed training inside prison

Many of the Kunga women were clear that their participation in the prison program helped them find the strength within themselves to identify and face trauma in their lives.

They made us break the cycle, like silence, break the silence in violence. And that's very tough for Aboriginal women. Some of us want to hide inside, like sometimes I feel I'm trapped inside and thinking about myself is that I want to run away sometimes from my kids because I think I'm too dangerous to be around them. Kunga mob [KSVP gives me that feeling, that I am a good mother and it makes me feel strong inside from my young girls. I miss them.

Well they helped me to identify my issues, well I have anger issue, and they helped me identify that and prior to being incarcerated I was just an angry person. And a lot of my anger has led to depression and where I felt like I didn't know what was wrong with me ... but this program has really helped me to identify my issues. And I know a lot of the ladies in here, we're going through similar things. When I was able to identify my issues, then I'm able to fix my problem.

It helps me a lot to understand what violence is about. ... how it gets you into trouble and all that. I just want to go out, when I get out of here, I want to go back home and show it to my family and tell them that violence is I mean it's not good. It makes you end up in jail

KSVP case managers also recognised the capacity of the prison course to assist women come to terms with, and work through, complex trauma and to find the language to express the emotions associated with their lived experiences.

I feel like the course really gives people a chance to think about their actions, their feelings, what, the things that they've done wrong, good things that have happened in their life, the bad things that have really triggered stuff that's gone on in their lives. The trauma that people have been through, and we work through

that in a 'therapeutic feelings' way. Getting them to open up and to let go of bad stuff.

And them understanding their feelings as well, what they're feeling, they can actually put a name to it.

Kunga women also focused how the prison course improved their own self-esteem, mental health and wellbeing.

When I first met [KSVP staff she opened my mind ... for drugs and alcohol, domestic violence, you know; I've had ... so many domestic violence with my partner, that's why they were opening my mind

When I did the course they were really, really good. I came in really sad and didn't know what to do, I was just thinking about killing myself, that's all. But some of the [KSVP ladies talked me into – encouraged me to keep going for my children and my dad because I've got lots of kids back at home.

I like having Kunga [KSVP, 'cause they teach me the right way and helping me ... and I am so proud when I see [the case managers.

Two of the Kunga women interviewed expressed the desire to take the four-week prison course again, an opportunity made available when there are vacancies in any particular cohort.

Another prominent theme raised by many of the Kunga women was the sense of community developed between those who had undertaken the prison course. Working through trauma histories alongside one another assisted them in living together more harmoniously within the confines of the prison, as demonstrated in the following exchanges.

*What's so good about it is that we respect each other as women. We like to work together. That helps build this trust in [each other
And know each other's background as well. Some of us have gone through a similar problem.*

And we respect each other and, like, became sisters in here and friends, friends and sisters. It's like we know each other for a long time now, when we're in prison together.

It's good to have that family relations here. It gets – helps us each day, every day, like we get more to know the Kungas

The way we reveal what's inside of us. It's like having to know everything about each other. We trust each other and Kunga program helps us to know one another.

Participating in the prison course was also compared to being on country, which was associated with feelings of happiness and familial connection.

It's like being ... out bush ... and it makes everyone to talk to each other and have a yarn and make jokes and all that. Sort of bring us all together and make it like a family sort of thing. It's pretty good. Yeah, that's what I like about the Kungas program.

What I like with Kunga is when you finish the program, we cook kangaroo tails... and we sit down with the ladies and we sit and talk in a happy way, you know. We've been here, some of us, for a long time and we never taste kangaroo meat.

They make me really happy. It's like back at the communities doing all the colouring in and writing, all that. Talking to people and just makes us happy being together, all us girls.

Kunga women also expressed aspirational statements for their post-prison futures, motivated by their work with KSVP.

My hopes is when I get out of here, I just want to be out bush, and just yeah take good care of my grandkids, yeah.

Well I'm happy that I've done this course, it's helped me a lot, when I'll be out, I'll tell my families that I'll be strong outside, not to come back here.

My hope is to not to come back in here, and change my life around and trying to be a good mum and just start taking ... my life seriously, just be really good you know and try get a job and be, be there for myself you know, and for my family.

I'm ready for change, I'll be 40 at the end of this year, oh my god, and I just want change you know, I just want change. I want to live a healthy life, I want to be able to reach my full potential, you know, I want to go to places I've never been to before

An area, separate to the 'classroom', is set aside for painting and drawing and, while time is allocated specifically for such activities, the Kunga woman have the freedom to use this space at any time during the course. A large collective artwork is also produced by each cohort: most are displayed in the KSVP office, although space is becoming limited as each year produces two canvases. Art is clearly an important component of the prison course.

When I started painting that painting on my canvas like, it sort of made me feel better inside me, yeah. It's a painting of ... love, respect, trust and care.

The painting show me about my dreaming and ...it keeps me strong for my kids and for my culture. So that my children can have their dreaming with them, because it's really good to have that dreaming, it tells us who we are. We belong to the earth with our dreaming, it makes us who we are.

The painting that I'm doing is about having a strong relationship with family and friends and respecting our country, respecting our land and culture. And being a traditional owner and just staying strong, being strong of who we are.

One case manager described the art activities as a meditative process.

We're covering a lot of really, I suppose, heavy topics when we do the talking sessions in our program. A lot of time is also spent in the art to help women just have time to think. And a lot of our women do dot painting and that's just a really great repetitive mindfulness practice. But also it's just about them

expressing who they are and expressing their culture and feeling good about themselves and where they come from and feeling like, even though they're not on country, that they can be connected with that wherever they are.

Lastly, the value of a 'women-specific' model was recognised by both women in the prison program and service providers on the outside.

I think it's hugely important to have a service that's responding, specifically to women, I think [it is really needed within this community, and women who are experiencing being in the prison system as well, and the challenges. And I think that the understanding that the women in that team have around responding to, particularly when women are in prison, and also having babies, and having babies while they're in there, and the challenges of being separated from children, I think it's really important that that's a specified sort of service and not a generic sort of one size fits all.

Systems are in place to support staff mental health and wellbeing

Working with women with high-end complex needs, and constant exposure to clients in crisis, can be difficult, especially within a client-focused framework, Case managers recognised this and described feeling stressed at times, especially during Covid-19 restrictions (discussed below).

So it was really, really stressful for me, and for them as well, and knowing - you know - they were starving, they had no food. But they had money but couldn't access it because they weren't allowed in town because of the biosecurity blocking them coming into town.

Sometimes there are bad days, especially if they have come in and we've done something really good with them the day before and the next day they come in assaulted from their partner.

Because there must be so many things that are just out of our control.

Yeah, and that happens quite a bit when they've come in assaulted from their partner

It's so tough this job and you have to be really mentally prepared to be here. It's draining, because some of the stuff we see and some of the stuff we hear, it's painful. You have to be really strong to come and work at Kungas.

While this evaluation report by no means attempts to provide a psychological assessment of the KSVP team, there is a very real potential for staff to be at risk of Secondary Traumatic Stress, emotional duress that results from regularly hearing about, or being exposed to, the firsthand trauma experiences of another. Every staff member described the emotional toll associated with the nature of their work. When asked how they cope, some staff said they accessed a formal counselling service provided through Head Office at the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA). More important, though, were the debriefing strategies put in place by the program manager at KSVP. The case managers also said the program manager was 'always there' if they needed to talk, or 'if we are a little bit stuck'. More formally, the KSVP office doors are closed early at the end of each week for a team debriefing meeting, with other measures in place should that not be possible. Staff were also required to return work vehicles to NAAJA's Head Office before officially finishing for the day, to avoid 'last minute' lifts (for clients) blurring the lines between work hours and personal time.

All of the staff acknowledged that the 'solid' relationships within the team contributed to a strong and supportive work environment. Staff recognised the ongoing informal support that team members provided one another on a day-to-day basis.

We've got a pretty positive team, pretty open team so nothing ever stays bottled up in us. Yeah we talk to each other if we need to debrief.

I think because people have really strong relationships in the team anyway ... our whole team as you probably have observed kind of normally just talk all day, you know, with each other and interact.

The program manager expressed some concern that this organic type of support may be restricted during Covid-19 restrictions, with staff being isolated from one another. 'Check-ins' have been increased since Covid-19 restrictions and are discussed elsewhere in detail.

That mental health and wellbeing is taken seriously at KSVP is evidenced by the longevity of staff. The program manager is a founding member of the organisation; one case manager has worked with the organisation since February 2017 and the other two since June 2017. In a sector that reports high levels of staff turnover¹³, this is testimony to the systems in place to ensure care for its staff, and is recognised by other service providers in Mparntwe/Alice Springs.

I do have a query, and that was just based on meeting the women that work for Kunga, and most of them have been there three years, four years, five years, and I'm really interested in how they've kept them.

So, they're obviously very interested in the work they do, but what is it ... what structure has she [program manager] put in place for them, what responsibilities are there, how has she evolved them that they've actually hung around for that long? Because Alice Springs is a pretty transient place, people shift from work to work ... So, I'm interested to hear some of that, because I think that's a credit to Kungas.

Staff employ a range of effective techniques to communicate with clients

Staff report using a number of platforms to contact their clients outside of prison. While the telephone (calls and text) is generally the first point of contact, home visits and 'word of mouth' through family members is also relied upon. Staff employ highly proactive steps to keep in touch with the Kunga women, using their local knowledge and connections within the community.

We go for drives because some ladies we can't find them, they're not home, they're not answering, we'll go for a ride up town and there they are.

¹³ Pourshaban, D., Basurto-Dávila, R. & Shih, M. 2015, "Building and sustaining strong public health agencies: Determinants of workforce turnover", *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice*, vol. 21, no. 6, pp. S80-S90.

Email is not a communication platform of choice; however, KSVP does have a Facebook profile which has become a much more active platform for communication since the impact of Covid-19. After restrictions were put in place to limit physical contact with clients, concerted effort was made to invite current and former Kunga women to ‘Like’ the page, and one specific staff member was given responsibility for curating its content.

It's really good 'cause some of the ladies that we haven't connected with in a few years, you know are our friends on Facebook and they're connecting ... we can give them our numbers to call us, and just finding out what they've been up to since they've left Alice, so that's really good.

I think we'll keep that one after this is all finished [Covid-19 restrictions] because it is a particularly good way for the ladies who aren't, you know, aren't able to physically drop in, to kind of drop in on us and contact us.

Staff also visit clients outside of Mparntwe/Alice Springs, with regular visits to Jurnkkurakurr/Tennant Creek and also to other specific remote communities to visit women who have returned home after being released from prison. One such visit was the source of great pride for one of the Kunga women interviewed at Alice Springs Correctional Centre.

They came to my community, which is adventurous. I really enjoyed [staff] coming to my community ... which is in the northwest corner of South Australia. I was really happy to see them. They came and saw the house where I lived and I've shown them my yard, how I've been working on the gardening and I transformed my front yard. I've been working on my house. They were really happy to come and see me doing all that.

The possible need for interpreters and/or translators came up in conversation with the KSVP program manager, however, the case managers did not express concern about the problems stemming from language barriers.

I think because we're from here too, we can understand their language. I mean we can get interpreters can't we, but we've never had to use them ... And it's

good because some of the other women will interpret for us, so it's fun when they start doing that.

The impact of working in English was raised by staff in secondary interviews, conducted during Covid-19 restrictions (discussed below).

The low-profile of the organisation works to its benefit

One last aspect is the relatively low profile of the Kunga Stopping Violence Program. Clients are referred to KSVP while incarcerated in the Alice Springs Correctional Centre; awareness of the service is therefore generally limited to women imprisoned for an alleged violent crime, or to families who are, or who have been in the past, part of the program. This was certainly the case for the majority of Kunga women interviewed for this evaluation.

I didn't know anything, they just came in here and that's all, I found them here in prison.

I didn't know ... Because some of the ladies were doing the program ... they said 'oh it's really good, you can talk to them and they will help you for things that you want'.

The majority of other service providers spoken to for this evaluation had a general sense of the work KSVP did – trauma informed support work with Aboriginal women in prison – but few were aware of the breadth of services provided.

I know they've got some great workers, but I don't probably know enough about the actual program that they do within the prisons.

Even one of the KSVP case managers admitted she wasn't aware of the program before being interviewed for a position on the team. This is not considered to be a negative quality, as this exchange between case managers indicates.

No one really knows who we are, except the prison, the Court system and our clients and some services here and there.

I think it's kind of good for, if we have husbands trying to find [their wives] because we're really hidden and our space too, so yeah.

The physical KSVP office space is not clearly signposted, which allows some anonymity to the location and, as mentioned above, assists in maintaining the service as a safe place for Kunga women and their children. The atmosphere is conducive to 'drop-ins' and clients need not make an appointment. During the evaluator's visit there were often young people using the computers while they waited for family, mothers bringing babies to visit the staff, and many other unexpected visits – on a week described by case managers as atypically quiet. One stakeholder commented on the unique nature of the office environment at KSVP.

Women who are feeling really, really down have got these little bubbies they bring in, and there's kids running around. Half of the other services wouldn't even put up with that in Alice Springs!

Most importantly, Kunga women accessing the office clearly saw it as a safe space for them to visit, where they could comfortably seek assistance.

They help with violence, and to help a lady ... to get better for their self. To be good for their self. And not go through a hard time with their partner and all that. That's why I – some girls - they come here and spend time here. Do paintings, and just hang around. They do painting and computer ... around here at the office.

For me I like to come here, it's real good for me too – Because – I went through a hard time with my partner. But he's in prison. And often I come here ... and they stay with me. And then I talk to [staff] about my problems. And they try and get me to a safe place. Like to stay at ... women's shelter

Covid-19 response

From mid-March to early June 2020, KSVP was unable to physically meet with Kunga women due to Covid-19 restrictions closing the office to both clients and visitors, forcing most staff to work from home. Suspended services include prison visits, providing lifts, home

visits, remote community visits, in-court support and face-to-face meetings. The bi-annual four-week prison course, originally scheduled for May was also postponed. The course was, instead, delivered with a smaller intake (to allow for social distancing) from Jun 1st to 25th, and then again from July 27th to August 20 to ensure all eligible women had the opportunity to participate. Due to travel restrictions, the author was not able to attend either delivery of the course.

According to the program manager, KSVP initially enacted its own social distancing restrictions by closing the office to visitors and only allowing entrance to current clients so 'we didn't have uncontrollable flow' and 'to be in control of who we're in contact with'. Soon after, Head Office of the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) introduced further restrictions that disallowed face to face contact, including providing lifts to clients.

So we, in one sense it was good for us because we'd started our own restrictions and then it kind of gradually went down to more severe so kind of let us and the clients adjust over a few weeks.

While much more difficult to manage, staff have continued to support their clients, mostly via telephone and also through the newly revitalised Facebook page. According to staff, the impacts of these restrictions are, not surprisingly, highly significant.

We still are doing a lot, clients are still contacting us by the phone and some things take longer, of course, when you just can't physically do them, so you have to make multiple phone calls

With the lockdown it's actually really hard because some of the ladies need our support physically, and when it's over the phone it's like they're getting stressed 'cause they're confused on what to do with just English words. And when we're physically together it's sort of more relaxing, we can just sort of flow with things I guess and take them to where they need to go, you know other than telling them to go to this certain place.

Supporting clients in negotiating Centrelink bureaucracy has proven particularly difficult. Under 'normal' circumstances, clients and staff can communicate with Centrelink staff together – usually from the KSVP office, or during home/community visits – so that clients can give direct permission for staff to speak on their behalf. One case manager described the complications that arose when providing telephone support to a client in a remote community.

I was trying to get access so they could have their BasicsCard because we had to put blocks on them and her keycard, because her family had the keycard and the BasicsCard... So, we had to try and ring Centrelink and I was trying to ring on their behalf just to explain the situation, but this lady from Centrelink didn't want a bar of it, didn't want to listen to me unless they [the clients] were there with me.

Some Kunga women live in remote Aboriginal communities across Central Australia and this has created 'Covid' specific work for the KSVP team. Additionally, working with women for whom English is not a first language has proven more of a challenge during the restrictions.

Because we've got very strict bio-security rules here, we've had a few ladies that we're trying to help get back to community but they have to do their quarantining first, so there's ... referrals and then checking in with those ... That's new work.

It's really hard for them to understand ... speaking another language telling her that she can't come. Whereas they're used to just getting up and going, you know? ... I normally go out and pick them up if they need to come into town and I was trying to explain 'I can't, I can't just get in the car and come, you know?' It's really hard. She rings every day, 'Can I come in, can I come in' ... 'Is the road open yet' ... Yeah, she's just wanting to get to family so they can mourn you know, but at this stage they can't.

Just helping the clients understand what the rules are ... when people have very limited English they'll see a news thing or hear something and they take it all the wrong way.

Similarly, while staff are currently able to receive phone calls from and make calls to women incarcerated at the Alice Springs Correctional Centre, they are unable to act upon many of their requests. The lack of face-to-face visits has impacted both staff and clients.

The ladies at the prison are missing us and, you know, it's a bit hard ... they're calling, our phones are diverted to our mobiles, so they're calling, we can call them, we can just make an appointment with the prison, like how we usually make appointments, but just by phone. So yeah that's, it's okay, but the ladies are saying things like 'Oh I miss when you come here cos you're always happy' and I was like 'oh miss you too',

They can ring if they want ... they want something and we can't do it you know, like go out to family ... So every day they're ringing and 'can you go check on someone' ... and yeah, we just can't. Yeah, really, really hard.

A more rigorous daily 'check-in' system (via Zoom) has been established since staff have been working from home to ensure they receive the practical and emotional support they need to cope with working under these extraordinary circumstances. This involves a morning meeting and an afternoon 'checkout' to 'make sure how the day went for people and just to keep up those relationships and talking through stuff'. Case managers reported that they appreciated the regular contact, which helped to keep them connected and to share each other's workloads.

It's really good, it's helpful and if we're frustrated and if I'm overloaded with work you know, I can pass it on if I'm just – everyone you know, my mob are ringing me and demanding this or that, we'll talk about it and [the program manager] or one of the other girls can take on some of my load like that. So, it's really good that we have those meetings twice a day.

A major concern to staff during Covid-19 restrictions was that prison visits were suspended, and the most recent four-week prison program was delayed. This meant there was a delay in new referrals to KSVP and eligible women may have missed the opportunity, not only to participate in the program, but also to be registered as a new client with KSVP before their release. Fortunately there was only a short postponement of the prison course.

Despite the difficulties presented by Covid-19 restrictions, KSVP has continued to make progress. As mentioned elsewhere, a newly established Facebook page has expanded the organisation's reach.

And it's good ... to be connecting with ... clients over Facebook, with the Tennant Creek mob, so that's a bonus. And just checking in what everyone's up to and putting in those positive messages

Since Covid-19 restrictions were put in place, a client used the Facebook platform to contact a case manager who successfully organised her transition into a rehabilitation service. Staff members recognise that the Facebook page could continue as an additional point of contact for clients beyond Covid-19: 'changing the way we work'.

There's been some interesting outcomes, you know, just the similar work that we do but kind of doing it through that social media thing, so that's been good.

KSVP has successfully added one new woman to their client list, despite the absence of formal prison referrals during the height of Covid-19 restrictions. The program manager had met this young woman when visiting the Alice Springs Correction Centre on other business, prior to Covid-19 restrictions. The new client had recently transferred from Darwin Correctional Centre and was referred by the NAAJA Darwin office.

She's a bit of a special case that ... and I had a sense of who she is and I've met her and spent three days with her, and she's an internal referral from NAAJA so we've kind of got a lot more capacity to connect in a meaningful way with her. So we've taken her on but she's the only new client that we've taken on in this time.

The KSVP team have continued to provide valuable service to many of their clients during the transition to a non-contact service, and staff appear to be (mostly) satisfied with the work they've achieved during this time. It is clear, however, that remote support can be only temporarily sustained.

I think if it went on for half a year or something it would be problematic ... for our service delivery because I think it would gradually be ineffective, you know. I think because we have very strong relationships with our clients and they tend to contact us a lot, there's still plenty of work too, there's still plenty of meaningful work to do. I think if this went on for an extended period of time the work would become more meaningless.

I had a lady that had a really bad domestic violence issue and I couldn't physically be there to support her, and it was really hard to just be on the phone, 'cause ... that's not our service.

Section Two: Future directions

Client perspectives

No complaints were made about the Kunga Stopping Violence Program by clients, staff or stakeholders during the evaluation interviews. Kunga women at the Alice Springs Correctional Centre were asked if there were any aspects of the service they thought of as weak, or lacking, or if there were any further activities, or measures of support, they thought KSVP could provide. One woman said she would like more help to contact her children, and to stay informed about their wellbeing, when she was incarcerated.

What Kunga can do ... connect with families on the outside and tell us where the kids are. Because none of us know where they are. We don't know, don't have any clue about where and what they are doing.

However, the most common response from Kunga women was a strong desire for further training, courses and programs.

More programs but different than the one we had before, more different ones ... How to look after children out there ... we want to learn more to keep our community safe for our little ones, from perpetrators ... It's really sad. And we need to learn more about that. And more things than violence and more about trauma and all that.

A stakeholder also identified ways in which KSVP could build on the training it currently delivers.

There's an industry with the babies and their children being removed, so there should be programs for mums and bubs, and mums and young children. And there should be programs on positive parenting and there should be programs. I'm talking about how this could be expanded, because I think it's a great model.

Staff perspectives

Case managers were asked how they would like to see the service expand 'if funding wasn't an issue'. All three responded that additional KSVP staff would be of most benefit – specifically a counsellor, a psychologist and a dedicated worker for Jurnkkurakurr/Tennant Creek. Staff also indicated they would benefit from a 'complete case note system' or database, which would allow them to quickly make and access notes on clients and cases.

One case manager said she would love to take the Kunga women on a holiday. While somewhat 'left of field' this response is indicative of KSVP's client-focused approach.

Take the ladies on a trip, yeah, it would be nice to do that ... because some haven't even been out of Alice Springs, so if funding wasn't an issue, I reckon take them somewhere nice.

Stakeholder perspectives

Stakeholders, Kunga women and KSVP staff all referred to a chronic lack of safe, affordable and secure housing in Mparntwe/Alice Springs and surrounding communities. This issue impacts significantly on many of clients of KSVP, interfering with their capacity to thrive. While this is a problem beyond the remit of the Kunga Stopping Violence Program, addressing this housing crisis is a high priority for service providers.

Something the Kungas [KSVP staff] would be the ideally placed service to support, would be housing for women who are released from prison. That puts them at a great risk - when they come out and have nowhere to go that's safe ... but otherwise, no, I have no criticism or critique of the service that they provide. They do a great job

This evaluation project was not intended to comment on 'double-up' in services for Aboriginal women in the Mparntwe/Alice Springs area. Amongst the service providers interviewed, there appears to be mixed opinions about how closely together key community organisations in the area should work.

Two areas – youth work and family/domestic violence - were clearly identified as spaces where other service providers could collaborate more closely with KSVP staff. One organisation was already aware of instances where they were working with clients who were family members of women supported by KSVP, and said they would ‘absolutely accept and take on referrals’ from KSVP for other young people ‘struggling in that space’.

I see that as an opportunity that we can link in, to be able to wrap around and do more of that family sort of aspect of the work ... so that we can – you know, it's not working with a young person or working with a mum in separation from the context of the rest of their world. So, opportunities to be able to connect in that. I think, as we go on, those opportunities will come up more

Other service providers identified a synergy between their organisation and KSVP when it came to working with survivors of family and domestic violence.

Having ... women flagged that might be going to unsafety when released from prison, perhaps that's a way in which we could work more closely to pick up those women and actually do a safety check with them, which I know [KSVP] do anyway, they're very good at that and they understand domestic and family violence very well ... But because we have the shelter and because we've obviously got a specialist team doing case management, specifically around domestic and family violence, that could also be helpful.

Furthermore, it was suggested by another service provider that KSVP could work with them to identify women who were sentenced to prison because they defended themselves in a long-term domestic or family violence situation.

...what we have found in the past is these women ... may not have the court cases built in the way that they could have, because nobody asked us, and we weren't aware, and that becomes really tricky. So, working with KSVP, because they obviously become aware – unfortunately, it's probably a little bit too late, because they're not necessarily part of the initial process, but working with KSVP, at least if there's something around parole that we can work towards for these women and help with information, then we can certainly do that.

