



**PROJECT
RESPECT**

Evaluation of Project Respect's Pathways Project

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Background

In 1997 Victorian research was conducted which found that 64.2% of women in the sex industry wanted to leave.¹ Despite their desire to leave the industry, many women state that they stay considerably longer than they hope to. This is because for many women, leaving the sex industry can be an intense and distressing period due to a number of factors such as:

- Drastically reduced incomes and the impact this has on their lives and the lives of their families;
- The loss of a community where they fitted in;
- Loss of identity;
- Feelings of grief and failure at having come out of years of prostitution, often with little to show for it;
- Difficulty knowing what to tell people about themselves ('you only have 3 ½ years of available life to talk about', as one consultant to the Pathways Project who had been in the sex industry for over a decade said);
- Being relegated to menial work for want of better opportunities.

In addition, once women leave, they often start processing violence experienced both in prostitution and before it, and this can feel deeply disempowering and disorienting. The coping mechanisms they used to survive prostitution – including disassociating – are no longer useful.²

In 2007, research conducted by Project Respect and funded by the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust identified that while there are many programs that offer support to people wishing to access educational and employment opportunities, women in the sex industry overwhelmingly either do not access these programs, or access them and fail.

Project Respect consequently developed the Pathways Project, which aims to provide opportunities for women to both process negative experiences they have encountered in the sex industry (which have damaged their self-esteem and created barriers to accessing help) and realistically identify the support and resources they need to succeed in their future plans. In this way, it is similar to long-established programs for women addressing domestic violence or sexual abuse, which provide women with opportunities to 'heal' before they take concrete steps to re-enter the mainstream workforce or enrol in educational courses.

The Pathways Project was originally designed with four modules of which Helen Macpherson Smith Trust funded modules one and two. Project Respect did not receive funding for modules three and four and so, on recommendation from the funders, Project Respect partnered with Melbourne City Mission (MCM) to fund and deliver Modules three and four of the Pathways Project. This part of the program was to be based on MCM's 'Women for Work' program, an employment initiative for women who have gone through the prison system. MCM were also going to refer relevant clients to participate in Modules one and two of the Pathways Project. Women leaving the sex industry and women leaving prison often face similar barriers and issues (e.g. disclosure and confidentiality issues, issues of violence or abuse, isolation, disadvantage and lack of skills), therefore it was envisaged that this partnership would enhance Project Respect's ability to provide greater support to more women.

The broad themes for the program are:

¹ Noske, H. and Deacon, S. (1996), *Off our backs: A report into the exit and retraining needs of Victorian sex workers*, Produced by the Prostitutes Collective of Victoria, Melbourne.

² Project Respect's Pathways Project document.

- Module 1 – **transition issues** – issues for women while still in the sex industry, including how to minimise dangers, maximise savings; addressing shame, stigma; power and violence in the sex industry; finances;
- Module 2 – **processing negative experiences, healing and building for the future** – issues when leaving the sex industry; planning for the future; knowing your rights, recognising violence and building good relationships;
- Module 3 – **preparing to return to work or study** – identifying career paths, and how to successfully access educational and employment pathways; and
- Module 4 – **individualised programs** – assisting women to pursue specific courses/interests/employment.

The pilot phase of the project commenced in May 2008.

Introduction

Women's Health In the North (WHIN), a regional women's health promotion service for the northern metropolitan subregion of Melbourne, was engaged by Project Respect to conduct an evaluation of modules one and two of the Pathways Project. The evaluation methodology concentrates on the impact (ie. medium term effect) and process (ie. short term effect) of the program on the project participants. The outcome (ie. longer term effect) of the program for the participants is not assessed because of time constraints.

Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation focuses on the following objectives and strategies:

Objectives

1. A group of women from the sex industry, including two who have been trained as peer educators, who are work/education ready;
2. a tested pilot project that can be presented to state government for funding for ongoing implementation;
3. resources developed that can be used in future programs; and
4. stronger referral relationships and partnerships.

Strategies

- Two women from the sex industry trained as peer educators;
- industry experts looking at ways their organisation can address the needs of the target group;
- participatory approaches to facilitation;
- an approach whereby the positive pull factors of the sex industry are recognised;
- opportunities provided for participants to process negative experiences of the sex industry;
- resources provided to support the participants future work/education plans;
- suitable time, venue, transport, food, childcare etc; and
- appropriate one-on-one support provided.

The data collection methods included:

1. Reviewing of program documents, resources and participation records.
2. Focus group with program participants.
3. Interviews conducted with the program facilitators.
4. Interview with the Project Coordinator.
5. Phone interviews with five external organisations who presented in the program.
6. Interviews with peer educators.
7. Written survey with program participants.

Refer to Appendix 1 for more information on the evaluation methodology.

Limitations

As it is highlighted above, the initial design of the Pathways Project was four modules with each module being an eight week term that was run one day per week conducted by Project Respect. Funding was being received from Helen Macpherson Smith Trust to implement modules one and two, and on their recommendation, a partnership was formed with MCM to deliver modules three and four based on the 'Women for Work' program.

Towards the end of the second module the MCM 'Women for Work' coordinator visited the participants of the program to discuss the third and fourth modules of the program. The worker was a male and although he was experienced in assisting women to find employment the participants felt uncomfortable, partly because of his gender. Another source of discomfort was that the participants had built a lot of trust with the program facilitators and were reluctant to move on to MCM. It was highlighted by facilitators and participants that it takes a large amount of time and energy from everyone to create the kind of rapport that had been developed among the group. As a result the women were not comfortable continuing the program with MCM and the program concluded after the second module. Ideally the facilitator from MCM would have sat in on the first two modules to build rapport with participants but due to the nature of the discussion topics, it would have been inappropriate to have a male present.

As the program's objectives had been based on the implementation of a one-year program, there were some limitations in trying to achieve them in only a six month period.

This evaluation is based on this six month implementation of the program and will take into consideration the above limitations.

Evaluation Findings

The evaluation findings have been documented below under the relevant project objectives and strategies.

Objectives

Objective 1

A group of women from the sex industry (including two who have been trained as peer educators), who are work/education ready.

The following table demonstrates the number of enquiries Project Respect took about the program, where these enquiries came from, and how many women attended and completed the program.

	Age	Suburb	Enquired about Pathways	Attended Pathways	Completed Pathways	Sex Industry
1.	Unknown	St Kilda	Yes	Attended first two sessions	No	✓
2.	Mid 30s	Ballan	Yes	Completed Module 1 only	No	✓
3.	Late 40s	Coburg	Yes	Completed Module 1 and 75% of Module 2	Yes	✓
4.	51 years	Darebin	Yes	Yes	Yes	✓
5.	Late 30s	Ivanhoe	Yes	Completed Module 2	No	✓
6.	22 years	Coburg	Yes	Yes	Yes	✓
7.	Unknown	Flemington	Yes	No	No	✓
8.	15 years	Unknown	Yes	No	No	✓
9.	Unknown	Unknown	Yes	No	No	✓
10.	38 years	Unknown	Yes	No (unable to attend the set times)	No	✓
11.	40 years	Unknown	Yes	No	No	✓
12.	Late 30s	Unknown	Yes	No	No	✓
13.	Late 20s	Carlton	Yes	No	No	Unknown

As it is evident above, thirteen women spoke to Project Respect to enquire about the Pathways Program. Of the thirteen enquiries twelve of the women were from the sex industry and of those twelve, five attended a significant amount of, or completed the Pathways Program. There were no enquiries from MCM. Of the three women who did not complete the program, one woman and her family were facing imminent homelessness and found it too stressful to continue on, another was unable to attend due to her child's specific childcare requirements and another was not ready for such an intensive program.

Three of the women who completed the Pathways Program were asked if they felt confident and ready to enter a work ready program if they chose to. Below are their responses:

No. Not because I lack confidence, I'm just not ready to do it yet, because I have a few personal things that I need to deal with first.

No, I'm not really ready for a work ready program. You have to go into that with motivation and it's not really there for me.

No. I think I'm getting there and I think I am more ready than I was three months ago, but I'm not quite there yet.

The same three women were also asked what else they required in order to be ready to enter a work ready program. Two women responded to this question and below are their responses:

When I first came to the Pathways Program I was at rock bottom. The Program has been really good in terms of building up a bit of confidence and being able to actually speak to people. I just think that I needed longer. Being supported, listened to and having people value your opinion and encourage you along with the little writing exercises and discussions builds up your confidence. You do feel better, it just builds up gradually. I just wish it could have kept going for a bit longer than it did.

I know this course is ending, but perhaps it needs more funding and then maybe we could have some employers come and speak to us. I mean working people coming to speak to girls who have worked in the sex industry and [are] ready and willing to employ them so that we could see some examples of people that have work and see that someone would employ us. It would also be good to see some people from different jobs. You know, people with a bit more interesting things to do. I don't want to sit at an office desk and use a computer all day. Something from home and something a bit more flexible not just a 9:00am to 5:00pm situation would be good.

It appears that this objective would have been met if the program had been run for the full twelve month period. The women were already on their way to feeling work/education ready and simply needed more time in order to achieve this.

Objective 2

A tested pilot project that can be presented to state government for funding for ongoing implementation.

The implementation of modules one and two have meant that the activities, strategies, times, venues and structure of the proposed Pathways Project have been thoroughly tested and adapted in order to be ready for state government funding. The testing of this program with women also identified the positive impact that the program has on its participants.

All of the program participants, the facilitators and the program coordinator were asked if there had been positive impacts on the participants as a result of the program. There were many positive impacts identified and the most commonly acknowledged ones were decreasing social isolation, increasing access to services, receiving support and understanding from Project Respect and the other participants, empowerment, increase in self esteem and confidence, and finding direction with work and study. All of these impacts were experienced by all of the women except one who wasn't quite as positive as the other participants about her involvement in the program. Here is what she said:

I wouldn't say it has been positive but I wouldn't say negative either. I guess it's given me the motivation to get a resume together and to look for work. In that respect I guess that's positive. I'm thinking about employment or taking steps to actually get myself job ready so that has been positive.

All of the other women reported that the most significant positive impact was the enhancement of their social connectedness and how this stemmed from a very positive group dynamic. Here is what one woman said about her experience.

One of the things I miss about prostitution is that sort of environment when you're sitting in the girls room chatting and you get quite friendly and it's almost like a second family. When you leave you lose that. You don't have normal contact with the normal world because we're 'different' and I have trouble getting to meet new people. It's like I don't know how to act. It's really hard to make myself into the real person not the prostitute so to speak. This just gives me that little contact still. That's helping me to stay out of the industry because I have this support set up.

The group dynamic has been a very powerful part of the Pathways Project. For module one the women arrived at lunch time and had a communal lunch first and then proceeded into a group discussion about the impact that the program had on their lives over the previous week and for module two the program began in the morning with the group discussion. It was reported that this has had a dual effect, in that the participants felt they had support from Project Respect and also support from the other women in the group. The participants reported that they felt a sense of understanding from Project Respect and the other participants that they don't feel elsewhere in the community. They reported being able to talk about things that they can't talk about with their closest family or friends because if their family or friends haven't been in the industry they just don't understand. One woman said that being understood 'creates a sense of freedom' for her. Another woman said she felt like she had friends in the group and that she felt like she had fitted in more than she ever had in her life.

Another positive impact reported is the improvement in self esteem and confidence that the women have experienced. This improvement in self esteem has also lead to the participants gaining more clarity in the direction they want to take with work or study.

It's given me a direction to go in and to not just be floundering. It's helped me focus on what I need to do and I've decided to go back to university next year. I am also going to move in with my parents so that I don't have a financial imperative to get a job. I think being here helped set me on the path towards that. I'm not sure how it will go but it is something that I want to work towards anyway.

One of the facilitators reported that 'most women seem more confident and that they have an idea of what they want to do in the future even if it's education or volunteering and not employment-driven'. Another facilitator said 'there seems to be more clarity among the group'. Another facilitator highlighted the way that the group dynamic assisted the participants with building their confidence 'as the participants were very encouraging of each other and would point out each others strengths'.

A major positive health impact on one participant was the support she received to assist her to slow down her drinking. Prior to the program she was an alcoholic and drank to assist in relieving anxiety. The program has helped her to realise how much she is drinking and to slow it down with the support of the other participants and, particularly, the facilitators.

For some of the participants being connected to local services was really helpful. All of the participants accessed the financial counsellor, two women were accessing Yarra Leisure services, one woman had obtained a bike from a local community service, approximately six women accessed Fitzroy Legal Service, and one woman had also accessed the community health centre to see a psychologist. This also contributed to women feeling more connected and supported. One facilitator said:

The fact that the women don't want it to end and they are worried about not having that support anymore shows how important it is to them.

Objective 3

Resources developed that can be used in future training courses

The Pathways Project was not designed to be a regular training course where you come into a classroom situation, and we impart knowledge and information to you. It's a course where we all participate as equal adults, and we all learn from the process.³

The Pathways Program was outlined and documented before the commencement of the pilot program. As it is suggested above the program was delivered with the participants. At the beginning of the modules the facilitators outlined a list of topics which could be covered and the participants were asked to prioritise the topics according to their preferences. As a result the program changed throughout its implementation in response to the participants' needs and requests. An outline of the program that was implemented with all of the changes included has been documented.

A more thorough and in-depth documentation of each session has also been recorded. This version of the program covers the specific details of the times and activities for each session. This program could be used to replicate the Project. However, it is still designed to be implemented in collaboration with the participants and therefore, changes according to the participants' requests are still required to be made and incorporated into the sessions upon implementation.

There were a number of activities and presenters throughout the Program. Some of these activities required resources and activity sheets and most of the presenters gave handouts and resources to the

³ Pathways Project documentation.

participants. All of this information has been compiled into a folder so that these materials are available to future facilitators.

The facilitators were asked if they had all of the resources they required to facilitate the program and their responses are below:

No, definitely not. More money is needed to be able to pay for things but also for Project Respect to have more time as well. It would be good to have more money so that we can engage services for the creative aspects of the program and to also pay for more childcare. We could also do more advertising if we had more money, such as [putting] an ad in the classified section of the local paper where they advertise brothels. This would have got the message about the program out to more women.

The resources within the six months were adequate. However, it is clear that you can't do two, eight week blocks; you need to go on after that. So now the issue is resources. It needs to be done as a one-year course. We didn't have the money for that so we partnered with MCM. However, I really think it needs to be a one-year course with the same facilitators. The resources Project Respect doesn't have, in terms of expertise, is about particular job paths. MCM has that information. They know about what industries are looking for places, what courses you need to do to get into particular work etc. However, because the worker there is a man, the participants didn't want to access MCM. The other option is for someone at Project Respect to build up that knowledge.

We were constantly having to look at the budget. I know that with organising the speakers we were a little restricted. We were lucky that we had people who were prepared to come and do things for nothing. There were some activities that we had looked into that I'm pretty sure were scrapped because we didn't have the money. There were restrictions due to the budget.

Yeah we pulled them together. At the beginning I didn't feel like I had almost anything. The main thing we had was that we knew the work from the inside out. That was what we had that people outside Project Respect haven't got. That is what pulled everything together and then we called in external people from different services. We didn't need many external resources because most of it was internal resourcing.

Objective 4

Stronger referral relationships and partnerships

A major objective of the Pathways Project was to create stronger referral relationships and pathways for the participants of the program and also more broadly for women in the sex industry. According to the external services involved in the program this has been achieved with all five of the services interviewed reporting that it has increased their referral relationship and partnerships with Project Respect. This is also evidenced by the number of women who have had an appointment at the various services as a result of their involvement in the program, which is demonstrated in the table below. Training in working with women from the sex industry was also provided to four service providers (six people) who participated in the project. More training has been requested by service providers.

The project coordinator of the Pathways Project said:

Links with different organisations will help Project Respect in general. I have a meeting with North Yarra Community Health (NYCH) so we can formalise a process for sending women who use our services as well as trafficked women who don't have a visa to NYCH. They have agreed to see them without charge. That was one of the objectives for the Pathways program, to formalise that. This is one example where this objective has been achieved.

The table below highlights the number of women who have been connected to services and which service they were connected to.

Participants	Service
5 women	Financial Counsellor
Approx 6 woman	Fitzroy Legal Service
1 woman	North Yarra Community Health
2 women	Yarra Leisure Centre
1 woman	Psychologist
1 woman	Melbourne City Mission
1 woman	Tenants Union

One of the key outcomes of the Pathways Project was the development of new relationships and the strengthening of existing ones between Project Respect and key community organisations and local government departments. These included Fitzroy Legal Service, Tenants Union of Victoria, Fitzroy Carlton Financial Counselling Service, Financial and Consumer Rights Council, Volunteering Victoria, Fitted for Work, Thornbury Women's Neighbourhood House, Melbourne City Mission, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Yarra Leisure, North Yarra Community Health, and Yarra Council Community Planning and Advocacy.

Other indications that referral relationships and partnerships have been strengthened include Project Respect feeling comfortable to ring the Fitzroy Legal Service for legal advice for their clients and the Financial Counsellor updating Project Respect's outreach worker with new information as it arises and subsequent referrals to these service providers for other women accessing Project Respect's services.

Yarra Leisure Services said that 'one woman has been ten times to the gym in the last six weeks which on average is more than reported by other people in the community'.

A number of positive outcomes have been identified as a result of the services' involvement in the Pathways Project such as five services indicating they had an increased understanding of women who work in the sex industry and the supports they require.

One service provider said the following:

It never occurred to me how difficult it would be for someone from the sex industry to get a job and how empty her resume would be. Also the limits in her skill set from working in the sex industry for a number of years. I already knew about the emotional trauma that some of these women face however I really didn't realise the extent of the discrimination that occurs. I am now mindful of all of these things when I work with women in the sex industry.

All of the service providers interviewed as part of this evaluation reported that, on the whole, their experience of working with the Pathways Project was a very positive one. Here is what they said:

I really enjoyed the experience.

I enjoyed being part of the program and really enjoyed meeting the women and the workers. It was a very warm environment to be involved in. Meeting women one-on-one from the sex industry has been positive and it is good to establish pathways to services. It has been a very satisfying and rewarding experience for me.

I was really impressed by the project and felt compelled to find ways of coming up with programs at the leisure centre that suited the women

We were very pleased to be involved.

Pathways has been able to build stronger partnerships through:

- The inclusion and active participation of members from local council and community organisations on the Pathways Project Steering Committee;
- the participation of community workers in Project Respect's training program 'Working with women in the sex industry';
- accessing training (in-kind) with partner organisations for Project Respect staff;
- engaging community workers to speak about their organisation and relevant services as part of the Pathways project; and
- establishing referral procedures between Project Respect and relevant organisations

The positive outcomes of the services' involvement also indicate that they will extend beyond the life of the Pathways Project, with the services suggesting that they would be happy to write support letters for the program and for the participants to attend their service for a tour. One service provider said 'we are very happy to contribute in any way possible to assist with access to services for the women'.

Strategies

Strategy 1

Two women from the sex industry who have been trained as peer educators

Two women from the sex industry were involved in the development of the program curriculum from the outset. Between the times that the funding was received and the pilot program commenced, one of these women started another job and was unable to work as a peer educator throughout the implementation of the program. Therefore another woman from the sex industry was engaged to be the second peer educator. This woman already worked at Project Respect and was available to undertake this role.

One role of the peer educator was to ring the participants every Monday and provide a debriefing opportunity for them. The participants collectively said:

The phone calls were great. You definitely need that support.

One of the facilitators felt that it was very valuable to have the two peer educators involved. She said:

I think it was very, very valuable that we had women from the sex industry involved as peer educators. I think it would have been much harder to do [the] program without having someone that had been in the sex industry. It really changes the dynamic and I guess it gives them an authority, in a way, so the women know that when things are said that they are talking out of experience and to give them a sense that they can do it to.

One of the peer educators reported:

The other peer educator and I have experienced working in the sex industry and that was invaluable. I don't think anyone could have run the course in the same way without that experience and it made the women very comfortable. We also had a network built around us and have access to information that we were able to share with the women as well.

Ideally Project Respect would have liked the peer educators to train two more women as peer educators but the lack of funding prevented this from happening.

Strategy 2

Industry experts looking at other ways their organisation can address the needs of women in the sex industry

The relationships which have been formed between service providers have lead to possible systemic change for women in the sex industry. Fitzroy Legal Service has said that they are conscious that if there are a number of referrals from Project Respect that it will impact on their already stretched resources. As a result they are applying for funding to employ a full time worker who will be solely dedicated to work with women from the sex industry. North Yarra Community Health is also looking at ways women from the sex industry can access their services in a prompt and confidential manner as well as putting up posters that make women from the sex industry aware that NYCH is a safe and understanding service for them. They are also seeking to train all of their staff in working with women in the sex industry.

Yarra Leisure Services said:

It has been good to find out about any barriers to our services for women from the sex industry, so that we can improve our services for these women.

Strategy 3

Participatory approach to the process

Three of the participants who completed the course were asked if they felt that the course was facilitated in a participatory way. In order to answer this question they were asked to tick a sliding scale between one and four which best described their response to this question. The numbers represented the following responses:

- 1 – Definitely not
- 2 – Sometimes
- 3 – Most of the time
- 4 – Always

Two of the three participants answered four (Always) to this question and one participant answered three (Most of the time) to this question.

A participatory approach was chosen as structured activities may be challenging for women who are not used to participating in a formal setting. The program also worked from an adult education philosophy, acknowledging that participants are not people in need of help and that each participant had expertise, strength, experience and knowledge that can be learnt from. This is why a teacher/student dynamic was not set up. The sessions were run with everyone sitting in a circle.

Strategy 4

An approach whereby the positive pull factors are recognised

The positive pull factors such as money, flexible hours, camaraderie/friendship with women who understand you, glamour and excitement are all reasons why women keep returning to the sex industry. All of the facilitators and workers in the program were aware and mindful of these positive pull factors when delivering the program.

As documented above, the participants reported that they felt a sense of understanding from Project Respect and the other participants that they don't feel elsewhere in the community. They reported being able to talk about things that they couldn't talk about with their closest family or friends because if their family or friends haven't been in the industry they didn't understand the women's experience.

Strategy 5

Opportunities provided for women to process negative experiences of the sex industry

There were a number of strategies implemented throughout the program to give women opportunities to process their negative experiences of the sex industry, such as discussions about the good and bad things about the sex industry and recognising violence and abuse. There were also discussions around mental health issues and post traumatic stress disorder. In addition, a peer support worker rang every Monday and was available to provide one-on-one support and women were able to access a

psychologist through the mental health plan. Arts-based activities also allowed women to experience other ways of working through any issues they may have.

All of the participants and the facilitators were asked if they felt that the participants had been provided with adequate opportunities to process any negative experiences of the sex industry. Here are the facilitator's responses:

Yep, I really do. It doesn't actually take long to process those things. It's a matter of understanding that you are allowed to think negatively because when you are working [in the sex industry] you are trained and encouraged by anyone employing you not to think negatively eg. 'you don't worry about that', to block all of those things. Sometimes you can be made to feel as though you are a wimp or there's something wrong with you, so you think that you can't cope. And here we are saying: hey! No healthy person can cope with this, it's an unhealthy situation. The way you feel is normal and so the validation helps you to move through that really quickly. – Project Respect

No, I think it needed to run over a longer period of time, I think, because we always got diverted. Because we would go around the circle and talk to the women about how their week had been, some of them could be talking for half an hour about what her week had been. So you have five women in the group all doing that and there is five and a half hours gone. I certainly think it has gone a long way to it, and it's no fault of anyone's I think that to be really truly beneficial to the women I think it would need to run over a year. I don't know that I could look at all of those women now and say: 'yep, they are all ready to go and write a resume and start applying for jobs'. – Project Respect

Clearly there is far more that women need and in an ideal world you'd probably give them a whole lot more support around that, but it's more than anything else that has been offered anywhere in Victoria as far as I can see. It's probably more than anything that has been offered anywhere in Australia. I don't necessarily think it is adequate to meet all of the women's needs but given what we could offer I think it would have helped. – Project Respect

The facilitators felt slightly differently about the opportunities to process any negative experiences of the sex industry. According to the above responses one facilitator felt confident that the women had enough opportunities to address the negative experiences however one facilitator felt that more time was definitely required. The third facilitator appeared to be somewhere in the middle acknowledging that the opportunities provided in the Pathways Project were more than most women would have experienced anywhere else, however she still acknowledged that more time would be beneficial.

Below is what the participants said:

Most negative experiences were processed.

It definitely was addressed, although I think we could have had more of it.

Yeah, I guess so, but I can't really answer that – so I'll pass on that one.

The participants did not elaborate on the above responses. However, given the mixed reactions above, it may be beneficial if the participants were given more time in the future to process negative

experiences of the sex industry. This may naturally be addressed if modules three and four are also implemented.

Strategy 6

Resources provided to support the women to succeed in their future work/education plans

Due to the limitations of the Pathways Project this strategy was not completely undertaken as it related more to the activities designed for modules three and four. However, even during the implementation of modules one and two, the women picked up along the way some resources that will assist them to succeed in their future work/education plans. For example, a book about writing resumes, interview tips and other handy hints for applying for a job was provided to all of the course participants. The participants were all linked up with Volunteering Victoria so that they can start to gain some experience in their field of interest and also to assist them to gain experience which can be included in their resume. One woman in particular was also assisted with scholarship information along with some other financial assistance to help with study, as she was considering going to university.

Although the employment components are important, the other resources provided in Modules one and two would have helped to support the women to succeed in their future work/education plans as well, i.e. working through negative experiences and having access to a psychologist, as the negative experiences from the sex industry are one of the reasons why women leaving the sex industry do not succeed in their work/education plans.

Strategy 7

Suitable time, venue, transport, food, childcare etc.

- 1 – Definitely not
- 2 – Sometimes
- 3 – Most of the time
- 4 – Always

Question	1	2	3	4
Was the venue suitable?	0	0	1	2
Was the time suitable?	1	1	0	1
Was appropriate transport provided as required?	0	1	1	1
Was appropriate child care provided?	0	0	0	2

Additional comments:

Very much appreciated the understanding shown of my child's particular needs and the efforts everyone made.

I found the morning times really inconvenient.

The facilitators made every attempt to be inclusive and supportive of everyone. Encouraged, but not pressured to participate.

Comfortable chairs would be helpful.

All of the women constantly commented on how good the food was.

Food was an important component and for some participants it meant that they were provided with a basic need that they didn't always have access to. One facilitator said that 'women from the sex industry are often used to eating take away food/fast food so this created an opportunity for them to have freshly cooked meals'. The food left-overs were divided amongst the women for them to take home. One participant commented that 'the lunch provided was her only meal for the day'.

The provision of childcare allowed two of the women to complete one module – something they wouldn't have been able to do otherwise. For one woman it was the only time she had a break from her children.

Due to the limited funding it was impossible to choose a time and day that would be suitable for all participants. The first module was a half day session to take into account the fact that women were used to working nights and sleeping in late. In Module two the program started at 10:30am because the facilitators were attempting to get the women used to an earlier start, as would be the case if they were employed in a 9:00am to 5:00pm job, and also in order to fit more into the curriculum. Most of the women were timely but some women missed classes due to other appointments or personal reasons. It was also impossible to have a venue that would be suitable for everyone. One participant travelled for one and a half hours to get to the program.

Public transport tickets (both suburban and V line) were provided to all participants who required it and some petrol costs were also covered.

Strategy 8

Appropriate one-on-one support provided as required

The participants felt that the Monday phone calls from the peer support workers were very helpful in assisting them to process the information from the session. However they also reported that there was no access to free outside supports. One participant said:

It would be good to have a professional counsellor or psychologist that could be accessed as well.

Some of the participants already have access to their own personal case workers, social workers and counsellors outside of the Pathways Project.

Another participant said:

I was getting a visit from a social work student who was doing her placement at Project Respect. This provided me with some support for my son and that was a really big thing for me. The social work student has continued to come for an hour or so a week which has been good.

The facilitators made the participants aware of the twelve free visits to a psychologist that they are entitled to with a mental health plan from their GP. One participant booked an appointment with a psychologist as a result of this.

One participant became aware throughout the program that she suffered from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTS). She said that this was both a positive and a negative thing for her to find out. On one hand she felt it was good because it was assisting her to understand how she had been feeling and 'it was putting the pieces of the puzzle together' for her. On the other hand she wasn't quite sure what to do with the knowledge that she has PTS disorder. She found this new information 'difficult to apply'. Some extra one-on-one supports for situations such as this could strengthen the program.

Peer support continues to be available to women who did not complete the Pathways Project as well as those who did.

The Most Significant Change

Each of the participants, facilitators and the project coordinator were all asked a consistent question.

This was:

What would you say has been the most significant change/outcome as a result of this pilot project?

The responses were varied and are listed below.

I think the women's growing sense that they are people with capacity and positive things about them who can build a future where they're happy. – Project Respect

The camaraderie between the participants and the atmosphere when they were at Project Respect. The people who came to present noticed it as well. When they were together as a group they really enjoyed it. I think that's evidenced by them wanting to keep coming. – Project Respect

Socialising has been a significant thing for me because I tend to isolate myself. I just tend to want to stay at home. Admittedly I am less tolerant of people nowadays than I ever used to be but it has helped me to be amongst others. I found that helpful and of benefit to me – Participant

Seeing the changes in every single person and going 'wow'. – Project Respect

A break from the isolation I was experiencing, an improvement in self esteem and an improvement in my inner strength. More ability to cope with things in life and to be able to stand back and look... perhaps not to look so harshly... at myself. – Participant

I just felt very touched that there was a group of people who cared what happened to me, who didn't know me but were just compassionate and supportive irrespective of that. That was a big thing when you have been doing everything on your own and not getting help from anyone. It's hard to ask for help or accept it. There were people who were willing to give it and give it happily. It makes you look at the world a bit differently. – Participant

The Pathways Project itself. It is something that we have talked about for a long, long time. It's been such a hard road to get funding so the significant thing is that we did get funding for it and it did actually happened and it's all good! – Project Respect

What worked well?

There were a number of things consistently highlighted in the evaluation discussions that worked well. Some of these have already been mentioned in the objectives and strategies above. However, below is a summation of them.

The major thing that worked well was the group dynamic which could be attributed to a number of things such as the number of women in the group, the facilitation of the group or the individual women themselves. Originally Project Respect were hoping to engage more women in the group. However, on completion of the pilot program, all the facilitators felt that if there had been any more women in the group there would not have been enough time to get through the activities and give each woman the support she required. So the number of women worked particularly well. The other thing that contributed to this dynamic in the first module was the session commencing in the middle of the day with lunch. All of the facilitators and participants said that this gave the women an opportunity to socialise and connect. The lunch also made them feel valued and they were all relaxed and ready to focus when the sessions started.

The relaxed nature of the session was reported by all three facilitators to work well. The participants also liked this and the ability to come and go as they pleased as sometimes the topics were confronting and they needed time out.

Giving the participants the opportunity to input into the topics covered in each session helped to engage the women and to ensure that the program was relevant to their needs.

All of the participants enjoyed the guest presenters. Everyone reported things such as 'I would never have gone to see a financial counsellor if I hadn't met one. If you'd given me a card and even made an appointment for me I wouldn't have gone'. But because the women had the opportunity to meet the service providers and to find out what they actually do by asking questions, they felt comfortable enough to confide in them and book appointments.

The phone calls by the peer support workers on a Monday made it possible for the women to process all of the things that had been taken on board from the session. It made more of a difference to some participants than others, but everyone accessed them and found them valuable at various stages.

What didn't work well?

It was clear when the second module commenced that the morning time wasn't working and this was reported by all facilitators and participants. For a lot of women in the sex industry they have had many years of shift work and it wasn't realistic to expect the women to adapt to a 9:00am to 5:00pm schedule. It also meant that the lunch was in the middle of the session rather than at the beginning which prevented the opportunity to connect, wind down and chat before the session commenced.

The participants did not continue on with the third and fourth modules as they were uncomfortable partly because the worker was a man and partly because he didn't have an understanding about the issues they had experienced and there had been no opportunity to build a rapport. All of the participants wanted the program to continue for module three and four with Project Respect. Module three was to be held at Project Respect but Module four was to be individualised.

The lack of resources impacted on the workers' time. All three facilitators and the project coordinator felt that, if they had more money and therefore more time to work on the program, it would have assisted them to be more coordinated and as a result have strengthened it. It would also have meant that Project Respect could implement module three and four in the way it had been planned and intended.

Conclusion

Most of the above objectives have been met throughout the implementation of the Pathways Pilot Program. It can be assumed that if Project Respect had received the full funding for the Pathways Pilot Program that all of the objectives would have been thoroughly met with a number of other tangential outcomes. As the Pathways Program has been successfully piloted, documented, and the objectives mostly met the goal of '*A piloted 12 month empowerment and training program for women, leaving the sex industry*' has also been achieved.

The pilot program has provided a great opportunity for Project Respect to work with women from the sex industry to strengthen and refine the program for further funding. A number of recommendations have been outlined below simply to build on the work of the pilot and to further increase the positive outcomes for women participating in this program. However, as highlighted throughout this report, the pilot program has already resulted in a number of positive outcomes for the wellbeing of women in the sex industry the main ones being to assist women into future work/education pathways and to assist women who choose to, to leave the sex industry.

Recommendations

1. That Project Respect receives ongoing funding to implement the full four modules of the Pathways Project.
2. That the program commence at lunch time for half a day rather than a full day commencing in the morning.
3. That facilitators and peer educators continue to be involved in the Pathways Project (who have experience working in the sex industry) and that the peer educators train other women in the sex industry as peer educators.
4. That the amount of psychological support for participants be increased for future programs by having psychological services for referrals in place.
5. That the funding is adequate to cover the costs of providing child care.
6. That the participants continue to guide the course topics and that a flexible approach is always applied.
7. That the number of participants be kept below eight for each session.
8. That participant's are able to leave and rejoin the course should they decide that they are unable to continue for personal reasons or that external factors prevent them from continuing.
9. That external agencies are continually engaged to present at the sessions.
10. That Project Respect continues to build their relationships with external agencies in order to increase referral pathways for women in the sex industry and to increase services understanding of women in the sex industry.

Appendix 1

Table 1: Program Goal - Outcome Evaluation Focus				
GOAL	INDICATORS OF SUCCESSFUL ACHIEVEMENT	DATA SOURCES	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE
A piloted 12 month empowerment and training program for women leaving the sex industry.	Project piloted and all of the objectives met.	Course Coordinator	Kerryn	Completion of the program

Table 2: Program Objectives - Impact Evaluation Focus

OBJECTIVES	INDICATORS OF SUCCESSFUL ACHIEVEMENT	DATA SOURCES	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE
A group of women from the sex industry, including two who have been trained as peer educators, who are work/education ready.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of women trained and where they are from. • Did the women complete the course? • The women feel confident that they are ready to enter a work ready program. • Final program manager report that women are work/education ready. 	<p>Course Coordinator to provide records of participation to Kerryn</p> <p>Focus Group with participants</p>	Kerryn	End Module 2
A tested pilot project that can be presented to state government for funding for ongoing implementation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tested pilot program (module 1 & 2) ready to present to government as fully documented program with all resources finalised. • Evaluation demonstrated positive impact on relevant target group. 	<p>Course Coordinator to provide program documents to Kerryn</p> <p>Facilitator Interviews</p> <p>Focus Group with participants</p>	Kerryn	End Module 2
Resources developed that can be used in future training courses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course outline developed and documented. • Curriculum fully developed and documented. • Fact sheets and resources developed. 	<p>Course Coordinator to provide program documents to Kerryn</p> <p>Facilitator Interviews</p>	Kerryn	End Module 2
Stronger referral relationships and partnerships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program facilitators reported referrals – amount and types. • Program presenters reported stronger relationships and partnerships. 	<p>Program facilitators to identify who has been linked into external services.</p> <p>Phone interviews with 5 organisations that presented to the program.</p>		End Module 2

Table 3: Program Strategies - Process Evaluation Focus

STRATEGIES	INDICATORS OF SUCCESSFUL ACHIEVEMENT	DATA SOURCES	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE
Two women from the sex industry who have been trained as peer educators.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two women identified as trained peer educators. Peer educators feel confident and prepared to undertake the peer educator role. 	Course Coordinator to identify peer educators Interviews with peer educators	Kerryn	End Module 2
Industry experts looking at other ways their organisation can address the needs of women in the sex industry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industry experts reported organisational actions to address target group needs. 	Telephone interviews with 5 organisations that presented to the program.	Kerryn	End Module 2
Participatory approach to the process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants report they felt engaged and involved in the program. 	Participants - written survey	Kerryn	End Module 2
An approach whereby the positive pull factors are recognised.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants felt the positive pull factors were understood by program staff. 	Focus group with participants	Kerryn	End Module 2
Opportunities provided for women to process negative experiences of the sex industry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities for participants to process negative experiences provided. 	Focus group with participants Facilitator interviews	Kerryn	End Module 2
Resources provided to support the women to succeed in their future work/education plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources provided to the women to support future work/education plans. 	Focus group with participants Course Coordinator interview	Kerryn	End Module 2

Suitable time, venue, transport, food, childcare etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant feedback regarding time, venue, transport, food & childcare. 	Participants - written survey Facilitator interviews	Kerryn	End Module 2
Appropriate one-on-one support provided as required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Options of peer, worker and outside support provided. 	Participants - written survey	Kerryn	End Module 2
The most significant change recorded from the participants, the facilitators and the project coordinator.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant feedback Facilitator feedback Project Coordinator feedback 	Standard Question for – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants Facilitators Course Coordinator 	Kerryn	End Module 2