

Evaluation

of Young Luv Program
to Prevent Violence Against Women

MAY 2017



**Aboriginal Family
Violence Prevention
& Legal Service Victoria**
**Standing Firm Against
Family Violence**

Acknowledgements

Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria (FVPLS Victoria) acknowledges and respects the traditional custodians on whose land we are fortunate to live and work, and we pay our respects to all Elders past and present.

Artwork by Wanda Bargo

Wanda is a Kuku Yalanji woman born on Wurundjeri land. Her artwork is featured in this publication.



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1 Introduction

1.1 VicHealth Evaluation Project

Established in 2002, the Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria (FVPLS Victoria) is an Aboriginal community controlled organisation. It is the only Aboriginal legal service in Victoria exclusively dedicated to assisting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (hereafter Aboriginal) victims/survivors of family violence and sexual assault.

In October 2016, FVPLS Victoria received a grant from VicHealth to conduct a formal evaluation of Young Luv which is an existing primary prevention of violence against women program. The project required ten Young Luv workshops to be delivered between January and May 2017, however this became thirteen workshops due to increased demand.

The objectives of the evaluation project are to:

- review and improve current approaches to data capture;
- develop an approach to gathering outcomes information, where possible;
- apply these data analysis procedures to the Young Luv workshops that take place during January to May 2017, and
- examine the capacity and extension issues.

Young Luv encourages Aboriginal teenagers to think about healthy and respectful relationships at a stage in their lives when destructive patterns in relationships may have already been experienced or are becoming normalised. It engages Aboriginal teenagers in a culturally safe space where they can talk about and reflect on cultural strength, social media safety and the warning signs of controlling behaviours in relationships that so often lead to damaging experiences such as bullying and violence.

VicHealth has identified that there is “a gap in evidence and in formal guidance for mainstream agencies and government departments to ensure respectful relationships activity meets the needs of young Aboriginal women”.

VicHealth expressed a strong interest in the project articulating the extent to which Young Luv has Aboriginal cultural elements which are unique and exclusive, or alternatively, has scope to be “expanded or scaled-up in the future and incorporated into mainstream respectful relationships education approaches in order to meet the needs of Aboriginal young women”.

For the purposes of this report, when referring to Young Luv participants the words “girls”, “teenagers” and “young women” are used interchangeably and are taken to mean the target cohort covering Aboriginal females aged between 13 and 18 years of age.

2 Background

2.1 FVPLS Victoria: Early Intervention and Prevention

As an Aboriginal Controlled Community Organisation, FVPLS Victoria acknowledges and respects the cultural traditions, history and autonomy of Aboriginal communities. FVPLS Victoria offers clients a culturally safe and holistic service model. This service framework aims to counteract, or at least minimise, a deeply felt fear and mistrust of mainstream services which, for decades, has stopped Aboriginal women from seeking help for violent assaults both within and outside their families.

FVPLS Victoria provides frontline legal assistance which includes advice, court representation and ongoing casework in the areas of:

- family violence intervention orders;
- family law;
- victims of crime assistance, and
- child protection.

With evidence of the extent of violence against Aboriginal women increasing daily, FVPLS Victoria is broadening and sharpening its focus in the development and delivery of Early Intervention and Prevention (EIP) programs.

2.2 Sisters Day Out® and Dilly Bag

The signature EIP programs of FVPLS Victoria are Sisters Day Out (a one day workshop) and Dilly Bag (a 3 day intensive residential program). These workshops have been developed by, and for, Aboriginal women and they:

- are delivered in a culturally safe environment which unconditionally respects the experience and history of Aboriginal women;
- encourage learning and personal growth through the sharing of experiences;
- facilitate safe contact with lawyers and external support stakeholders, and
- reinforce the capacity of Aboriginal women to consider changes personally and within their families in order to stop violence.

Designed to connect with Aboriginal women in their communities and delivered in a culturally appropriate manner, Sisters Day Out and Dilly Bag strengthen confidence and trust levels so that Aboriginal women affected by violence in their lives might seek legal and social support from Aboriginal specific and/or mainstream services.

For the purposes of this report, the word “community” is taken to mean Aboriginal organisations, geographic locations, informal and formal associations and any other settings where Victorian Aboriginal people gather for purposes which include reinforcing and sharing cultural heritage, practices and values.

Table 1: Sisters Day Out and Dilly Bag Activity

2007-2017

112 SISTERS DAY OUT

42 DILLY BAG RETREATS



OVER 8000 ABORIGINAL WOMEN PARTICIPANTS

Source: FVPLS Victoria



2.3 Young Luv: Promoting Healthy Relationships for Aboriginal Girls and Young Women

Young Luv (YL) is FVPLS Victoria's newest Early Intervention and Prevention program. It is a 2 hour workshop which provides information about and reinforces the concept of healthy, positive relationships for Aboriginal teenagers.

The Young Luv concept arose out of discussions held at numerous Sisters Day Out workshops. Younger Aboriginal women, in the company of their Aunts, Mothers, Sisters, Cousins and other community members, spoke of the need to give teenagers an awareness building program tailored to their needs as they approach their first intimate relationships.

The objectives of Young Luv are to:

- promote an awareness of healthy relationships amongst Aboriginal teenagers;
- provide a culturally safe environment that encourages participants to talk, reflect on and better understand important issues around healthy relationships;
- help participants to build resilient attitudes through recognising cultural strength, and
- develop coping strategies to deal with issues impacting upon their lives and their communities.

The FVPLS Victoria staff members who devised the Young Luv program content are themselves young Aboriginal women.

The Young Luv program was piloted in 2015 with a grant from the Office of the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People. Following comments provided by participants, the workshop program was revised and adapted.

In 2016, Young Luv was delivered in selected schools, youth groups and community organisations across metropolitan Melbourne and country Victoria.

For the purposes of this report, when referring to Young Luv the words "program", "workshop" and "activity" are used interchangeably and have the same meaning.

Table 2: Workshop Activity 2016

Location	Partners	Participation
Lakes Entrance	Lakes Entrance High School	5
Portland	Dhauwurd-Wurrung Elderly and Community Health Service	10
Morwell	Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service	11
Doveton	The Gathering Place	8
St. Kilda Inner	South Community Health	9
Hastings	Willum Warrain	6
Bairnsdale	Bairnsdale Sexual Health Camp	13

Source: FVPLS Victoria

3 Young Luv - Evaluation Approach

The Young Luv evaluation project (hereafter “the project”) uses conventional action research methodology. As part of the project, FVPLS Victoria sought input from Aboriginal women across Victoria who hold and transmit those cultural values and community expectations which form part of the foundation of strong identity for their girls and young women.

The evaluation strategy involved:

- Reviewing the Young Luv pilot in 2015 and follow-up 2016 Young Luv workshops.
- Meeting fortnightly as an evaluation team to discuss action items and document progress.
- Mapping the administrative requirements to deliver more than 10 Young Luv workshops.
- Reflecting upon views and attitudes expressed by Aboriginal community members during negotiations to deliver Young Luv workshops and in follow up discussions.
- Devising workshop evaluation tools and testing them in workshops.
- Monitoring the workload and support needs of the facilitators.
- Checking in with the FVPLS Victoria Cultural Adviser to ensure workshop content and delivery is consistent with cultural values and community expectations in relation to young Aboriginal women.

The evaluation team comprises the following FVPLS Victoria staff members, all of whom work in the Community Engagement Unit, in varying part-time fractions: Young Luv Facilitators, Manager Community Engagement, Cultural Adviser, Project Development Officer, Community Engagement Administrative Officer and volunteers.

The evaluation team lays no claim to being qualified researchers, evaluators or statisticians. It is, however, a group of experienced, professional Aboriginal women who have strong links with their communities and are supported by non Aboriginal workers all of whom have completed FVPLS Victoria cultural awareness training.

The Aboriginal facilitators sought to collect information, faithfully and responsibly, from the Aboriginal teenage girls who participated in the workshops.

The evaluation team documented the themes and directions which emerged from conversations with Aboriginal community members, advice from the FVPLS Victoria legal team and interaction with other stakeholders.

Most importantly, the project team debriefed regularly and rigorously tested the available information in order to make qualified judgments about the effectiveness of Young Luv as a prevention of violence against women program.

The project team considered qualitative and quantitative data in the course of the project but acknowledges that it formed its views primarily through interaction with the teenage girls who participated in Young Luv workshops, the Aboriginal community members who contributed views and guidance and the sharing of advice and experience within FVPLS Victoria.

3.1 Theory of Change

Goals: i) To deliver a culturally sound and age appropriate workshop program focusing on healthy relationships to Aboriginal female teenagers across Victoria and ii) to build awareness of gender equality and the importance of culturally strong identity as foundations for respectful relationships.

Vision: Aboriginal girls and young women develop healthy relationships based on respect, self-esteem and confidence in their identity and the strength of their cultural heritage.

Objectives

- Introduce a continuous improvement approach to the delivery, evaluation and review of the Young Luv program.
- Maintain and strengthen respectful and positive relationships with Aboriginal communities who are core partners in the delivery of Young Luv.
- Build the profile of the Young Luv program as a strategic FVPLS Victoria early intervention and prevention initiative which focuses on Aboriginal teenage girls in their communities, schools, workplaces and regular places of social engagement.

Activities

- Submit funding requests to varied agencies to cover workshop delivery costs.
- Deliver 10 Young Luv workshops.
- Engage volunteers to support administrative functions for Young Luv delivery.
- Commit to fortnightly meetings to review processes, plan upcoming workshops and manage changes and risks in delivery.
- Discuss and document cultural safety principles specifically for Young Luv workshops.
- Review the existing evaluation approach and devise evaluation activities which are specific, meaningful, achievable, realistic and timely.

Measurements

- 10 Young Luv workshops between January and May 2017.
- Aim for 10 participants in each workshop.
- Increased community interest level and requests for Young Luv workshops across Victoria and metropolitan Melbourne.
- Percentage of participants in each workshop who demonstrate positive engagement by commenting, writing, listening attentively and/or questioning.
- Percentage of participants who rate the workshop according to the following: Very useful & worthwhile; Helpful & relevant; Not very interesting; No response.

Outputs

- Young Luv workshops are available and accessible.
- Transparent and achievable processes and systems are developed.
- Facilitators complete debriefing after each workshop and reflect on achievement of goals with the evaluation team.
- Promotional materials badged with Young Luv designs are distributed to communities and participants to strengthen Young Luv name recognition.

Outcomes

- Aboriginal teenage girls participate actively in workshops and begin to use language and explore concepts related to positive relationships and the prevention of negative images and behaviours towards women.
- Aboriginal women see their Daughters, Nieces, Cousins and others attending workshops which focus on strategies for Aboriginal teenage girls to build healthy, respectful relationships, thus reinforcing a prevention of violence against women message.
- Aboriginal teenage girls talk about safety using social media and practise ways to reduce vulnerability.
- Enhanced cultural connections through participation in Young Luv workshops.

Impacts

- Increased safety of Aboriginal teenage girls through awareness of early signs of gender violence in relationships.
- In due course, Young Luv participants register for Sisters Day Out activity in their region.
- Extended capacity of FVPLS Victoria to address prevention of gender violence through EIP programs directed at teenagers and young women.
- FVPLS Victoria's expertise and knowledge of attitudes and behaviours of Aboriginal teenage girls is shared and taps cross-sector capability to respond with positive strategies.

4 Young Luv - Principles and Planning

4.1 Set up

Of the many complexities underpinning the delivery of Young Luv workshops two elements of particular note became apparent over the course of the project.

Funding

Young Luv is a new program for FVPLS Victoria. It has no recurrent funding base, and as such, in each of its three years of delivery the first priority has been to secure one-off grants for delivery of individual programs. This requires significant effort. Funding requests are submitted, tentative delivery sites are surveyed, a light touch promotional campaign is initiated in Aboriginal communities, and contact with non Aboriginal agencies such as secondary schools and local councils is instigated. Nothing is finalised until funding is approved and then detailed planning commences.

The preparation of submissions for different funders in specific regions, communities or local government authorities is time consuming. Further, each funding agency has its own acquittal and reporting framework which adds to the administrative requirements of the program.

Consultation

Organising Young Luv workshops involves numerous discussions with diverse contacts. School wellbeing officers, Koori Education Support Officers, community liaison workers, Aboriginal youth workers and many others are the key people who will book the venue, organise the catering, promote the workshop to prospective participants, arrange transport for participants, organise parental permissions for younger girls and attend the Young Luv workshop, if the community requests it.

The mechanics of delivering Young Luv is complicated, however the most important activity is talking with Aboriginal community members. There are protocols about who to speak with in community. These must be respected, and adhered to.

Demand for Young Luv workshops across Victoria has grown significantly. To date, 24 Young Luv workshops have either been delivered or have been funded.

This rapid expansion involves considerable challenges but is testament to the level of interest from Aboriginal communities in providing teenagers with a customised prevention program which deals with issues around identity, forming healthy relationships and being safe.

Table 3: Young Luv Workshops 2017

Date	Location	Funding Source	Participants
14.02.2017	Warrnambool	Gunditjmara Aboriginal Cooperative	14
21.03.2017	Darebin - Thornbury Secondary College	City of Darebin	11
22.03.2017	Portland	Department of Justice	5
23.03.2017	Heywood	Department of Justice	5
18.04.2017	South Morang	City of Whittlesea	7
04.05.2017	Bendigo	Southern Loddon	14
8.05.2017	Sale	East Gippsland CIF	3
9.05.2017	Bairnsdale Secondary College	East Gippsland CIF	11
9.05.2017	Lake Tyers	East Gippsland CIF	5
10.05.2017	Orbost	East Gippsland CIF	11
10.05.2017	Lakes Entrance	Lakes Entrance Community Health	7
16.05.2017	Echuca	Southern Loddon CIF	14
17.05.2017	Echuca	Southern Loddon CIF	14
22.05.2017	Edge Mill Park	City of Whittlesea	TBA
31.05.2017	Swan Hill	Loddon Mallee Northern CIF	TBA
13.06.2017	Kyabram	Southern Loddon CIF	TBA
28.06.2017	Horsham	Grampians CIF	TBA
TBC	Reservoir	City of Darebin	TBA
TBC	Edge Mill Park	City of Whittlesea	TBA
TBC	Hamilton	Department of Justice	TBA
TBC	Southern Metropolitan	Department of Justice	TBA
TBC	Ferntree Gully	Department of Justice	TBA
TBC	Werribee	Western Metro CIF	TBA
TBC	Melton	Western Metro CIF	TBA

Source: FVPLS Victoria

Legend

CIF - Community Initiatives Fund - DHHS funding under the Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Strategy

TBC - Location to be confirmed after community discussions

TBA - Participant numbers to be advised after workshop

Table 3 provides an overview of the Young Luv program activity funded for 2017. The evaluation sample comprises 13 Young Luv workshops delivered between 14 February and 17 May with a total of 121 participants.

4.2 Capacity Building

The demand for Young Luv workshops in 2017, combined with the focus offered by the evaluation project, encouraged a review of systems and administrative practices. The result has been a clearer understanding about the critical importance of information management, the benefit of using systems which bring activities under administrative control, and the realisation that the team can do more with the same resources once activities transition from being exceptional to “business as usual”.

The initiatives described below had the effect of drawing FVPLS Victoria staff, from all parts of the organisation, into the evaluation journey.

Staff members from the legal team, the policy and strategic support unit, and those in administrative support regularly pass through the Community Engagement space and would often stop to read updates on the office wall, make comment, ask questions, offer technical support or join in on lunchtime conversations “around the table”.

By making the evaluation project visible to all, a ripple effect of interest and invaluable contributions became an unexpected by-product of the activity.

Initiative 1: Reflecting, planning, reviewing and improving

Despite the pressure of negotiating workshop delivery, extensive travel and other work requirements, the evaluation team made a commitment to meet at least every fortnight to maintain engagement with the evaluation process. This commitment led to the following communication and capacity building strategies:

- A **working wall** was created in the main office for the duration of the project where background information, Young Luv delivery schedules, suggestions for new activities, anecdotes, sample forms etc. were progressively posted so that the team had access to the project as it evolved.
- **Mobile phones** using the conference call facility were routinely used to link the group into discussions when facilitators were “on the road”.
- **Photographs** of white boards covered with the girls’ thoughts and contributions were brought back to the office for transcription.
- After every Young Luv, facilitators recorded a debrief of the session and the **audio file** was emailed to the volunteers for transcription.
- A one page **Evaluation Report** was completed after each Young Luv covering: workshop details; participant information; participant evaluations; and facilitator observations. This served as a snapshot which was posted on the working wall so everyone could see at a glance how the project was unfolding.
- **Lunchtime debriefs** occurred spontaneously, but regularly, to support facilitators in their workshop delivery. Discussion covered anything and everything including: dealing with sensitive topics and responding to personal disclosures; using anecdotes, storytelling and personal experience; providing varied activities - videos, role plays, Q&As, group work; identifying and supporting disengaged participants.

Facilitators challenged themselves and the project team to continuously review Young Luv in order to shape a two hour workshop that would be informative, compelling and culturally sound.

Initiative 2: Participant data and profiles

During February 2017 a registration form was developed and trialled. Facilitators, aware of literacy issues for many participants, chose language and posed questions that were accessible for the girls.

The registration form, titled ***Sisters Slay Sign Up*** collects personal details, and in addition asks girls to identify two ways they like to stay connected with their friends from the following list:

- mobile (text, calling);
- social media (Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat etc.);
- community events;
- school;
- hangin' out;
- family events;
- sports;
- other.

This information provides useful background to start discussions in the workshop, and also develops a picture of the preferred communication preferences of the teenagers.

In March, a ***stakeholder database*** was introduced and all Young Luv participants are now registered in a repository which is easily updated and searchable. The Young Luv evaluations are in the process of revision and it is anticipated that in due course the evaluation responses will be captured in the database.

Over time, the stakeholder database will provide longitudinal data which will inform the refinement of Young Luv, and provide an evidence base for the development of new initiatives in the prevention of violence against young women space.

Initiative 3: Volunteers

Twice yearly, FVPLS Victoria advertises for volunteers. This year the evaluation team approached the February recruiting phase with a precise view about how volunteers might support the capacity building of the Young Luv project.

Three experienced professionals from backgrounds in teaching, careers counselling and senior administration joined the evaluation project team. They completed an intensive cultural awareness program, were able to offer their time on the day of the scheduled evaluation meetings, have taken over the transcription of Young Luv workshop evaluation activities, and most importantly, are active and informed contributors to the lunchtime debriefs.

4.3 Aboriginal Perspectives: Culture and Community

A culturally safe environment is one where Aboriginal people feel secure and draw strength from their identity, culture and community.

For the Young Luv cohort this principle takes on added meaning due to the age of participants and their vulnerability to factors such as racism, bullying and assaults on their Aboriginal identity when outside their communities.

FVPLS Victoria creates a culturally safe environment when delivering early intervention and prevention programs. The hallmarks of cultural safety in the context of Young Luv include:

- the Young Luv facilitators are young Aboriginal women with links to the communities and family groups. They share the experiences of the participants making it easier to convey key messages;
- the Aboriginal facilitators demonstrate respect for the communities in which they are delivering Young Luv and are trusted by the community to engage with participants in a sensitive and culturally appropriate manner;
- respect is shown for the shared cultural knowledge and values of the participants which, in turn, encourages group cohesion and participation;
- there is an understanding that the trauma of past experiences of Aboriginal people, since first contact with Europeans, is transmitted through generations and affects young Aboriginal women today;
- there is an understanding that racist practices and attitudes confront Aboriginal teenagers daily and explains, to some extent, a reluctance to participate fully and comfortably in non Aboriginal settings;
- the Aboriginal facilitators adhere to Aboriginal cultural protocols and practices;
- within the workshop there is appreciation of different learning styles, particularly informal ways of learning through storytelling, humour, group and kinship interaction;
- Koori English is used as a valid communication style sitting equally beside Standard Australian English;

- opportunities are created so participants can share their life experiences and their perspectives as Aboriginal teenagers and young adults living in a dominant non Aboriginal culture.

Young Luv is one of a suite of early intervention and prevention programs. Like Sisters Day Out and Dilly Bag, Young Luv fits within the community ownership framework which FVPLS Victoria respects and supports unconditionally.

FVPLS Victoria knows that the effectiveness of its programs, whether legal or non-legal, rest upon its connection with Aboriginal communities, the trust which underpins that relationship, and its capacity to listen to Aboriginal women, hear what they say and respond accordingly.

The promotion of Young Luv is undertaken in a careful, considered and respectful manner. Some Aboriginal communities and families have been hesitant about the topic and the sensitive nature of the issues involved, while others have displayed a degree of anxiety about the personal details of their children being collected by a third party.

One community member questioned the collection of identifying information on the registration form. In response the Young Luv facilitator replied:

'As for the information collected on the registration form, we understand your concerns and are happy to remove the address. We are also happy to let you handle the RSVP's for the workshop. The only information we need to be able to deliver the workshop is size, names and ages for the hoodies which the girls receive at the end of the workshop. I hope this clears up your concerns, feel free to call me again for any further clarification.'

Building the Young Luv profile within the community will take time and will rely on some or all of the following:

- Positive feedback from participants and those who influence community opinion such as community leaders, elders, workers in organisations.
- Consistent attention to detail and responding to issues or concerns as they are raised by community members.
- Support from trusted community members such as Sisters Day Out participants.
- Engagement with schools, especially where there are dedicated Aboriginal staff members.
- Engaging graphics and messaging to strengthen Young Luv recognition.
- Visually strong and appealing takeaway items such as T-shirts, hoodies.

FVPLS Victoria recognises that it is the Aboriginal community that takes ownership and control of programs, and it is in this context that successful delivery is achieved.

4.4 Promotion

Young Luv is slowly developing a profile within the Aboriginal community.

The painted butterfly, in muted pinks and mauves, on the cover of this report is the consistent creative imagery used on all Young Luv promotional materials and displays. The dotted motif within the wings of the butterfly is a contemporary cultural rendition and the colours are designed to be feminine, appealing particularly to girls and young women.

Participants receive a show bag containing flyers, make-up, perfume, books etc, and at the conclusion of the workshop each girl receives a badged T-shirt or hoodie.

While this promotional strategy is designed to strengthen Young Luv name recognition within the community, FVPLS Victoria knows that attracting participants largely rests with word of mouth and the trusted referrals of Aboriginal women. Promotion of

Young Luv at Sisters Day Out gatherings is critical. The historical experiences of contact with Europeans and subsequent policies of exclusion have left many Aboriginal people with a deeply held fear and mistrust of educational and training programs and initiatives. As such, personal endorsements, an opportunity to see the workshop in operation, openness to questioning about the intent of Young Luv, and the natural functioning of the “Koori grapevine” are the key factors which, over time, will build the profile of Young Luv.

Finally, a word about the title *Young Luv*.

When the idea of a customised program for young Aboriginal women was first mooted the question of an appropriate name was extensively discussed. Those involved in the planning decided on the following criteria:

- the name should be short, and able to be written and signed in an attractive and compact way on promotional materials;
- the sound of the name should be gentle, playful and easy to say;
- the word should be meaningful in relation to the Aboriginal teenagers who are its intended audience.

Young Luv was selected and its growing recognition within the Victorian Aboriginal community suggests that it was an appropriate choice.

5 Young Luv - Workshops

5.1 Workshop Delivery

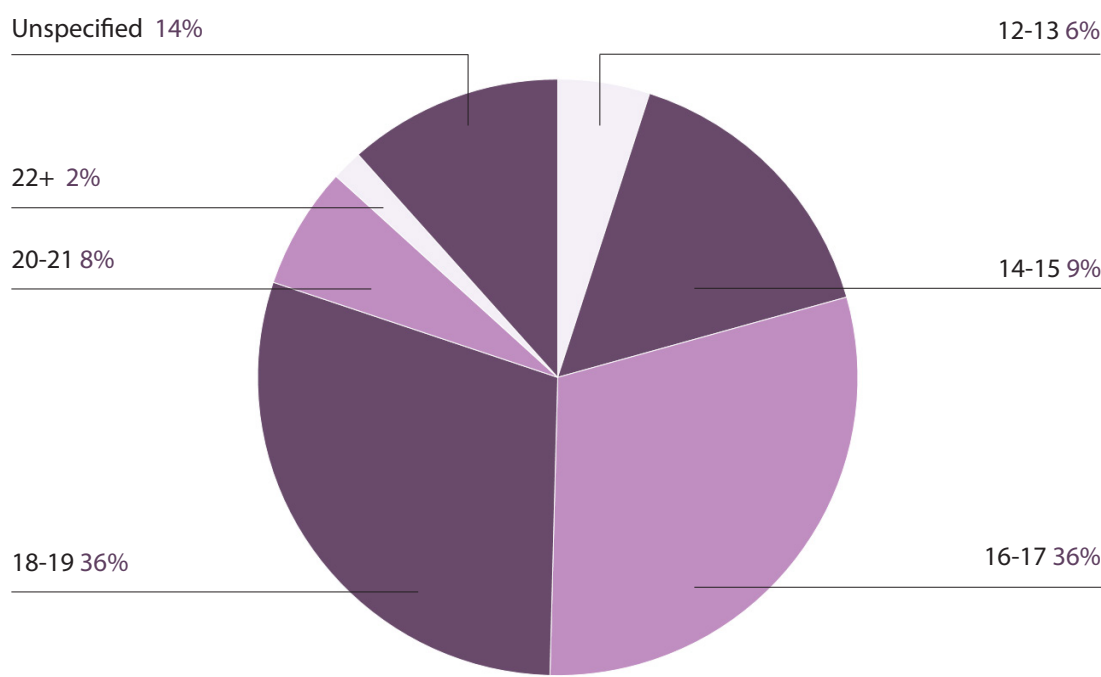
The Young Luv program is a two hour workshop which is delivered to a new group each time.

The participants are aged between 13 and 18, but in some instances where school groups are involved, there may be 12 year olds attending if they are in a Year 7 class and it would be unreasonable to exclude them. In some instances, older sisters accompany younger girls.

The difference in maturity and experience levels between 13 year olds and 18-20 year olds poses challenges for the facilitators. In many instances, the participants have some connections through family, school, shared sporting activities, peer social groups or general involvement with their Aboriginal community. This assists the groups to coalesce fairly easily enabling discussion and connection with the topics to progress quickly. Where the groups are less connected, shyness and natural reserve mean that the pace of the workshop changes and it is often late in the program before active engagement is evident.

The Young Luv Workshop Guide lists the sessions and activities. It is offered as a guide only with the understanding that in 2 hours it is impossible to cover all topics to the same level. The interests of the girls, the diversity of their experiences, and the level of engagement in activities determines how many topics are covered and to what depth.

Table 4 - Participant Age (number of participants = 121)



Source: FVPLS Victoria

Table 5 - Workshop Guide

YOUNG LUV Workshop Guide Program duration approx. 2 hours SESSION DESCRIPTIONS	
SESSION 1: STARTING THE DAY <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acknowledgement of country• Facilitators' introduction• Completing registration forms (individually, in pairs or small groups)• Overview of the day Activity 1: The ice-breaker Activity 2: Participants introduction Activity 3: Group agreement – cultural safety	
SESSION 2: IDENTIFYING BEHAVIOURS IN HEALTHY & UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS Activity 1: Whiteboard brainstorming activity	
SESSION 3: CONTROLLING BEHAVIOURS AND WARNING SIGNS TO FAMILY VIOLENCE Activity 1: Jealousy video Activity 2: Identifying controlling behaviours	
SESSION 4: HAVING FUN AND STAYING SAFE ON SOCIAL MEDIA – SEXTING AND CYBERBULLYING Activity 1: Sexting video Activity 2: Cyberbullying video Activity 3: Savvy Social Media Tips	
SESSION 5: COPING STRATEGIES AND SUPPORT NETWORKS Activity 1: Group discussion Activity 2: Safe spaces Activity 3: Assertive conversations – role play	
SESSION 6: YARNING CIRCLE – CULTURAL STRENGTH Activity 1: Talking about cultural strength Activity 2: I love me	
SESSION 7: WRAP UP Activity 1: Evaluation (individually, in pairs or small groups) Activity 2 : Lunch or Dinner	

Source: FVPLS Victoria

The workshop sessions aim to pick up on key issues relevant to teenagers in their social interactions and in their personal relationships. The facilitators do not lecture or preach but they do offer information, positive messages and practical strategies which encourage the girls to be aware of the risks inherent in some behaviours, to take responsibility for their own actions and to find strength in their cultural identity.

Facilitators are aware that reading and writing are challenging for some participants so where activities involve literacy competence, options are available for individual, paired or group activity. For example, the completion of the registration and evaluation forms are often undertaken by small groups where the more confident writers assist others.

A noticeable feature in Young Luv workshops is the comfortable way in which Standard Australian English and Koori English blend together providing a relaxed familiarity which encourages frank and open discussion between facilitators and participants. A third “language” used by the girls is a form of expression which the facilitators have come to call “youth speak”; words and phrases from contemporary youth experience.

Koori English is an expression of cultural identity. It serves as a link with Aboriginal heritage and a reinforcement of identity. Isaac Brown in his book *Koorie English* (1989) points out that, rather than being a separate language, Koori English is an amalgam of words, grammar, intonation, postural features and gesture. These features are drawn from traditional languages, the experience of colonisation and cultural oppression as well as contemporary life in community.

Comments from community members are highly valued by the Young Luv team. They demonstrate the extent of interest by community in all aspects of the program. For example one community member questioned the use of the word “slay” on the registration form. The Cultural Adviser discussed the issue with the team and the following response was provided.

‘Just to clarify, we use the term ‘slay’ in the same way we would use ‘deadly’ and ‘mob’. All are contemporary vernacular used by black people across the globe to connect with one another. While we use these terms often, we in no way mean them in the traditional English context.’

The **Workshop Guide** outlines topics and activities in much the same way as a conference program or school curriculum; however nothing could be further from the truth.

The impact and success of Young Luv relies, first and foremost, upon creating an atmosphere, which validates and celebrates the Aboriginal culture and experience of the girls. Only then will many of the girls take a risk and consider participating in discussions about the challenging, often very personal issues facing them in their daily lives.

Table 6: Language

Koori English - words commonly used by Aboriginal people in Victoria

gubba	=	non- Koori person
gammin	=	fake, joking
gunjas	=	police
moodji	=	friend
shame job	=	personal and group embarrassment

“Youth Speak” – words commonly used by teenagers

bae	=	short for “before anyone else” as a sign of affection
bff	=	best friend forever
throwin’ shade	=	criticising
sisters slay	=	girls are the best
wicked/rad	=	terrific, very good

Source: FVPLS Victoria

6 Findings - Young Luv Outcomes

6.1 Participant Feedback

The feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive. It highlights the extent to which the girls value the opportunity to come together in a culturally safe environment to discuss important issues for them with Aboriginal facilitators who understand and share their culture and community.

Session 2: Identifying Behaviours in Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships introduces concepts and language in relation to personal relationships. The facilitators emphasise the importance of respect in all relationships, not just those of an intimate nature. Working in groups, the girls were asked to think of words they might use to describe healthy and unhealthy relationships. Facilitators invited the girls to call out their words, variously asking for clarification, encouraging the telling of anecdotes, and voting, at times, to determine which words were most popular.

The Word Clouds in Tables 7 and 8 give a sense of the views presented. The total number of participants in this activity is 121

The overall statement that might be formed from the Table 7 word cloud is that the girls place great value on feeling safe, respected and supported in relationships, and as well, holding many of the conventional romantic images that go with being in love.

The overall statement that might be formed from the Table 8 word cloud is that girls have plenty of words to describe physical abuse and controlling behaviours (hitting, pushing, swearing, yelling, threatening) but are less likely or able to explain how the behaviours make them feel (putting yourself down, pissed off, feel like shit).

Session 3: Controlling Behaviours and Warning Signs to Family Violence consistently appeared to be the most difficult and challenging session. The video had less impact than hoped for and many girls seemed unable to find language to connect with the topic. In some instances it appeared that the issue may have been too personal and immediate for some and there was a discernible “shutting down” of responses.

Table 7: Healthy Relationships



Table 8: Unhealthy Relationships



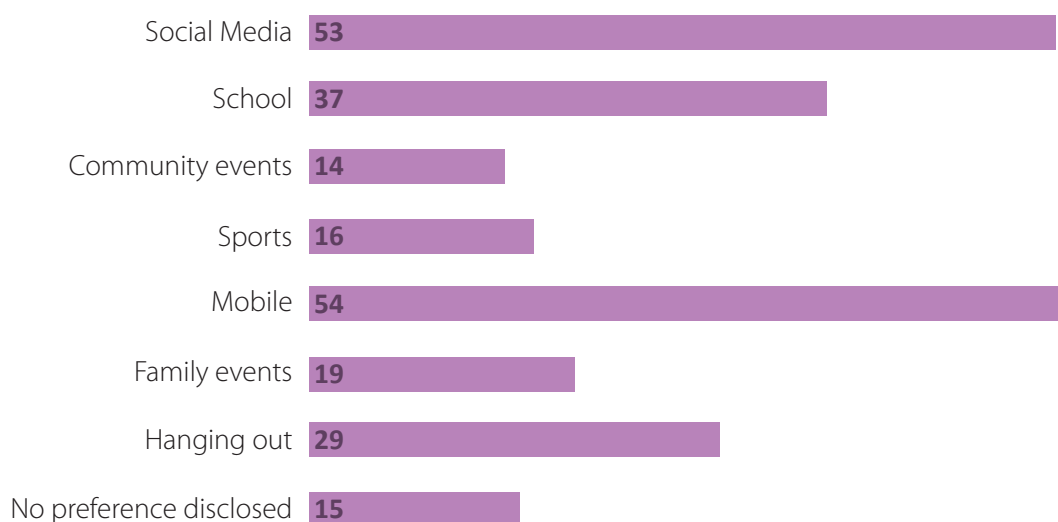
Session 4: Staying Safe on Social Media

This topic resonated strongly with participants in all workshops. Facilitators noted that there was a general acknowledgement that social media was now pervasive and central to the lives of young people. The anticipated “shock and awe” discussion which facilitators had expected became instead a rather prosaic discussion of what everyone knows; there is nothing that can be done to change the social media landscape and you just have to live with it. Some participants spoke openly about sexting, cyberbullying, slut shaming and more; others seemed embarrassed and uncomfortable with the topic. Table 9 provides an indicative sense of how participants prefer to “keep connected” with their friends. Social media and mobile phone contact are clearly the most preferred ways to connect with friends.

Session 5: Coping Strategies and Support Networks

This session has become a consistent favourite with participants. Through a series of short role plays of everyday situations, the facilitators act out positive ways to be assertive while maintaining a calm and dignified demeanour. The girls discuss the places where they feel safe and how family and friends can contribute to their sense of security. The focus in this session is on making decisions and taking actions which can contribute to positive outcomes.

Table 9 - Ways the girls connect with friends



Source: Young Luv Registration Forms 2017

Session 6: The Yarning Circle – Cultural Strength

Young Luv activities which focus on cultural issues appear to be highly valued. The measurement used is observational and includes spontaneous contributions, questions, active participation in group activities and sharing stories. Many girls are very keen to learn more about: their own Aboriginal culture and history; their language and stories; where they come from and which mob they belong to; song and dance; and how their mothers and grandmothers make sense of the world through a cultural lens. In every workshop racism is raised as a consistently negative and demeaning aspect of daily life.

The hunger for cultural knowledge is a central discussion point in Young Luv workshops. Facilitators formed the view that grappling with concepts such as healthy and unhealthy relationships are strongly influenced by self-image and personal identity. An intrinsic connection between strong identity and strong culture has been apparent in all workshops.

Evaluation forms

At the end of each workshop, participants were invited to complete an evaluation form individually, in pairs or as a group. Of the 121 participants, 119 evaluation forms were received. Participants rated their overall satisfaction with Young Luv using a 3 point scale with results outlined in Table 10.

Table 10 - Participant evaluations

Very useful & worthwhile	53
Helpful & relevant	61
Not very interesting	5
No response	2
Total	121

Source: Young Luv Evaluation Forms, FVPLS Victoria

The evaluation form provided opportunity for participants to make general comments about the workshop. The evaluation team selected comments which broadly represented the views of the girls. Table 11 lists these comments. A more detailed analysis of the comments would be informative but resources were not available to undertake this work.

Table 11 - Participant Comments

'It taught me to acknowledge our land and our people'

'It taught me to believe in myself'

'It has helped me to learn how important we are'

'It helped me notice that other people are going through what I'm going through'

'It has helped me very much in the way I treat and speak to others'

'Helped me acknowledge that control isn't love'

'Helped me to look out for myself and to love my culture'

'Helped me to have a little bit more self-love'

'It was good to have a safe environment to talk about issues'

'Showed me the difference between negative and positive behaviours in all types of relationships'

'Made me think about the people I have around me and their impact on my life'

'That if I'm ever in a relationship, I can know if it's turning into an abusive one'

'Thank-you for making me belong'

6.2 Facilitator Observations

Recording the thoughts of the facilitators immediately after each workshop, usually as they were driving home, proved to be an extremely useful and informative activity. The observations are intuitive, insightful and unvarnished.

Together, these debrief sessions give a very clear and poignant insight into how the workshops unfolded, the changes that have been made to improve sessions, the growing confidence and competence of the facilitators in their delivery, and their outstanding commitment to ensuring that all participants feel safe and comfortable within the workshop.

Listening to the audio files and then later reading the transcripts has provided an enormously valuable body of knowledge which has informed the work of the evaluation team. This iterative process validates the decision to use an action research approach and has empowered the team to be bold in making changes and trialling different approaches within, of course, the limitations of the 2 hour workshop format.

The debrief process between the facilitators was supported by regular discussions with the Cultural Adviser whose particular focus is on maintaining the cultural integrity of the program and the personal well-being of the facilitators.

FVPLS Victoria recognises that staff members from time to time face stressful and challenging situations in the course of their work. Structured counselling is available but of more immediate benefit to the Young Luv facilitators is the direct access they have to the Cultural Adviser whose professional experience is second only to the breadth of her cultural knowledge.

The evaluation team selected comments which provide insights into the finely-tuned and subtle observations of the facilitators. Table 12 lists these observations. A more detailed analysis of the debrief discussions would be informative but resources were not available to undertake this work.

Table 12: Facilitator Observations

'There were best friends and sisters in the group who had pulled each other through bad times; you could tell that they were each others' support network – that was a really strong and beautiful thing to see.'

'The more mature girls in the group had some quite mind-blowing answers when talking about unhealthy behaviours; they displayed quite high levels of thinking around family violence, like referring to 'emotionally abusive behaviours'. That was really powerful.'

'Getting the confident, outgoing ones to settle is a priority as these are the most important people in the group. We need to get them to 'get it' so that they can influence the rest of the group.'

'Well, I was quite shell-shocked when some girls made intense disclosures early on.'

'You get the feeling when the girls don't open up and share their stories, that maybe they are just a really vulnerable group.'

'The school environment can be pretty unsettling for the girls; the bells ringing, sounds from the yard, kids running past in the corridor. It's as if our girls can't get past where they are. No-one is relaxed.'

7 Conclusion

Violence against women is pervasive, unconscionable and has complex causal factors. For Aboriginal women this is compounded by intersectional issues relating to the history of European contact, the impact of policies of genocide and assimilation, pressures within Aboriginal communities, poverty, racism and much more.

Aboriginal girls and young women confront some or all of these issues, at a point in their lives when establishing a resilient personal identity, forming independent and positive relationships, seeing yourself in the present while planning for the future takes on a special urgency.

FVPLS Victoria understands many of the pressures confronting Aboriginal teenagers. The development of Young Luv is only one element of its EIP programming. FVPLS Victoria fully understands that a stand-alone 2 hour workshop for Aboriginal teenage girls is, at best, a beginning. Much more work needs to be undertaken by FVPLS Victoria to build a broader prevention of violence against young women strategy to complement and extend the impact of Young Luv.

The Young Luv facilitators, together with members of the evaluation team, are currently reviewing the content and structure of the workshop. The following opportunities for improvement are under consideration:

- Identify core sessions and build a library of other topics and activities which can be used in each workshop based on the age, experience and sensibilities of each group.
- Research the availability of videos and movies which have specific Aboriginal cultural content preferably referencing Victorian Aboriginal experience and/or with storylines promoting gender equality and strong female characterisations.
- Investigate opportunities for young Aboriginal women from the community who may be interested in attending workshops as mentors, or possibly becoming Young Luv facilitators with support from FVPLS Victoria.
- Consider options for follow up with participants to continue discussions and messaging around prevention of violence against young women.

- Investigate the inherent advantages and risks of establishing a private membership FVPLS Victoria Facebook site for Aboriginal teenagers who have attended Young Luv workshops.

The overarching message that has emerged from the work of this evaluation project is that programs and initiatives which are designed to influence the attitudes and behaviours of Aboriginal teenage girls, such as Young Luv, must have the endorsement, approval and backing of the Aboriginal community.

Further, the uniqueness of the Young Luv program is not located in session outlines or specialist activities, as any review of the workshop guide in this evaluation report would attest.

The key to Young Luv's success is its singular link to the Victorian Aboriginal community, communicated genuinely and powerfully by young Aboriginal women. Young Luv invites participants, for a short time, into a "world" in which they can feel secure, express their Aboriginal identity comfortably and explore their feelings and thoughts about personal relationships confidently.

Notes



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