

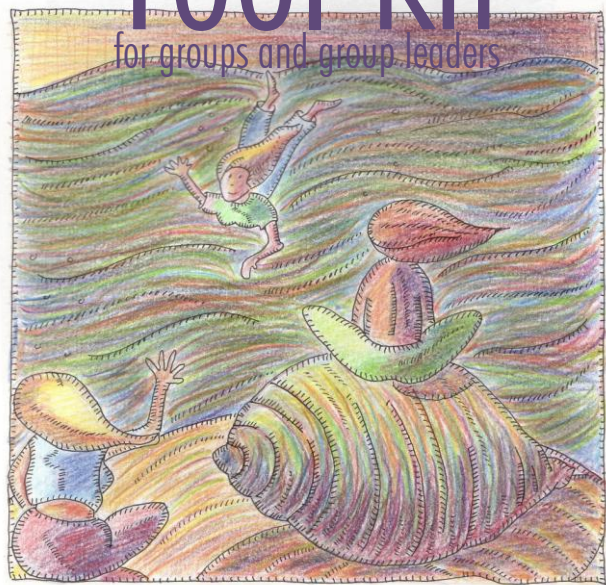
Women Gathering

Bringing Women Together Because Together We Do Better

Fun, Friendship and Support

Tool kit

for groups and group leaders



WOMEN'S HEALTH
GOULBURN NORTH EAST



Victoria
The Place To Be

Women's Health Goulburn North East (WHGNE) was established in July 2000. Previously known as NEWomen, Women's Health Goulburn North East is the government funded specialist women's health service for the Goulburn Valley and North-East Victoria.

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Collated by Julie Tyler, WHGNE and Di Pritchard, Rural Women Leading Change

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The principles of *Women Gathering* are:

- being inclusive and accepting diversity
- respecting women's confidences
- 'just getting together' because it's important
- Ask 'Who else could be here?'



The *Women Gathering Literature Review* identified these obstacles to developing closer relationships with women-

- confidentiality or lack thereof;
- gossip;
- not being listened to or feeling heard
- a pressure to conform,
- staying with the 'pleasant', and
- not knowing when to refer on when there is a real problem

What we learnt about groups

- Small groups with a focus or an activity - relaxation and talking occur over a structured or semi-structured activity. Art or craft work well as women's hands can be working and the activity is the focus, but talking and listening takes place and this is when women get to know each other and share together.
- Meeting together regularly for a minimum of 6 weeks is essential to building trust and sharing time together thus encouraging friendships through regular contact.
- Every group has one woman (or two) who is committed to bringing the group together and is able to devote time to do this. They are enthusiastic and motivated.
- Group ownership is important – Successful groups are where those where the women are a part of the decision making and the organising.
- Regular gatherings create a sense of continuity and the women get to know each other through the regular contact.
- Group rules are important and work best when explicit and include: Confidentiality; everyone has a chance to speak and be listened to and acceptance of difference.
- Celebration and fun is important
- One final piece of advice – always supply food! All women love to be fed.

Questions to ask to help plan your group:

- What focus or activity will we have for our group?
- Who will we invite?
- Who could we invite who might not attend other events or groups?
- How will we invite people?
- What are barriers or reasons that might stop women from attending our group?
- What will we do to help them attend?
- When will we meet and how often?
- Where will we meet? Is it safe, comfortable and appropriate for the activity?
- Will we share food together?
- What rules and agreements might we have in our group?
- What icebreaker ideas we might use?
- How will we share the leadership of the group?
- How will we all be able to participate or contribute to the group's organisation?
- Where will we go if we need advice?

Running the group:

- Have an appropriate and comfortable venue.
- Have an activity planned
- Be organised
- Welcome women as they arrive (ensure they can get there)
- Ensure the group knows everyone's name (do we need an icebreaker activity?)
- Have a process to talk about how the group will run. What rules or agreements will we have?
- Create an atmosphere which encourages diversity
- Develop active listening skills
- Attempt to be non-judgmental and accepting
- Learn to be comfortable with silences
- Allow everyone the opportunity to speak
- Observe the right of individuals not to speak
- Encourage everyone to look out for each other
- Encourage the group to reflect on their own participation and that of the group
- Celebrate achievements
- Remember to laugh and have fun

Group Leader

"... provides an environment in which individuals, and the group, can do whatever it is they need to do..."¹

"As group facilitators, we believe in the inherent value of the individual and the collective wisdom of the group. We strive to help the group make the best use of the contributions of each of its members. We set aside our personal opinions and support the group's right to make its own choices. We believe that collaborative and cooperative interaction builds consensus and produces meaningful outcomes. We value professional collaboration to improve our profession." (IAF Statement of Values @ www.iaf-world.org)

What the group leader does¹

- 1) Honouring/respecting (paying attention) to the group and individuals in the group;
"Speaking in a way that honours each person in the group and invites them, in a variety of ways, to enter into deeper awareness with the collective spirit of the group"
- 2) Providing a climate of safety/trust;
"Inclusively, questioningly, collaboratively, speaking in a language and tone that encourages people to feel comfortable and to contribute to a conversation in a safe, non-judgmental environment"
- 3) Being neutral/objective/unbiased;
"Using open-ended, neutral questions – and keeping myself and my views out of the discussion"
- 4) Encouraging inclusiveness;
"Opening, inclusive and explorational"
- 5) Enabling engagement (in a process);
"Using language to invite participation and interaction"
- 6) Ensuring clarity;
"Speaking using clarity, questioning, and supportively"

- 7) Being instructional; and
"Language that tells people where they should go next (in the process)"
- 8) Generating understanding
"Asking questions – proposing links".

Effect on the group

- 9) Opening up;
"Encouraging the members to open up and connect to the issue at hand"

"Using language that supports dialogue rather than debate"
- 10) Surfacing diverse ideas/thoughts;
"Stimulating dialogue while at the same time opening the dialogue up to others"
- 11) Being part of the whole; and
"Engaging others to be a part of the group's conversation enabling participants to have a space for sharing and being a part of the greater conversation"
- 12) Enabling participation
"Offering maximum choice and maximum participation".

Leading your group

Group Leader	Examples of Questions & Statements
Setting of ground rules	<p>“Our purpose today...”</p> <p>“What is the purpose of our meeting?”</p> <p>“What would be the ideal outcome?”</p> <p>“Where do you want to have got to when we go out that door?”</p> <p>“Relax and enjoy the journey”</p> <p>“Everyone’s opinion is valued, there are no wrong answers”</p> <p>“All ideas are valued”</p> <p>“It’s an honour to work with you”</p>
Acknowledging participants’ contributions	<p>“That’s an excellent thought. You are very (sincere praise).”</p> <p>“That interests me, say more”</p> <p>“Thank you for sharing”</p> <p>“Great- good- I like it- excellent- spot on”</p>
Probing	<p>“Say more...”</p> <p>“Can you say more about...”</p> <p>“Could you say more?”</p> <p>“Tell me more about that...”</p> <p>“Can you tell me more about that?”</p> <p>“Please, tell me more about that.”</p> <p>“Yes, please go on.”</p> <p>“Say more about that if you will...”</p> <p>“Please tell me more about what you mean when you stated...”</p> <p>“Tell us a little more about this.”</p>
Garnering participation	<p>“I’m wondering how this might look/appear/feel/seem to you?”</p> <p>“I invite you to...”</p> <p>“I’d like to invite you to participate in...”</p> <p>“Tell me about a time when...”</p> <p>“I’m curious to know what others think”</p> <p>“What do others think?”</p> <p>“Does anyone else have [something]?”</p>
Reflecting and clarifying	<p>“What I have heard is...”</p> <p>“Am I correct in observing that...”</p> <p>“So what you’re saying is...”</p> <p>“What I’m hearing is...Is that right?”</p> <p>“Please clarify”</p> <p>“What I hear you saying...”</p> <p>“Can you help me be more clear in my mind about...”</p>

Adapted from: Rixon, Andrew; Rixon, Sascha; McWater, Viv. (2006) Exploring the language of facilitation. Group Facilitation: A Research and Applications Journal, Number 7, 2006.

Group Ideas

Expression through Creativity
Mosaic Group
Printing
Letting go with Paints
Quilting
Candle Making
Trash into Treasure Art Group
Wool Group – knit, spin, crochet & teach others
Mother's arts group
Mosiacs
Calligraphy
Embroidery & Patchwork
Felting a banner
Gift card making
Crafty Connections
Leadlighting
Potters
Jewellery Making

Tai Chi Fan and Chinese Folk Dance
Walking group
Cycling group
Belly dancing group
Salsa and Latin
Fitness Morning
American dancing group
Bollywood dance group
Walking bush tracks
Tennis, Hit & Chat
Golfing
Bowlers
Gentle exercise
Boot Camp
Yoga
Horse Riding
Nodic Walking

Recipe - Swap Meet
Women cooking up a Storm!
Adventurous Cooks
Bring a plate
Coffee and chat

Book Club
Turkish Women's Group
Craft and Friendship Group
Scrap Attack (Scrap booking)
Triple F (Females for Fun & Friendship)
Women Creating Possibilities (a journey through grief)

Playing with your toddler
Fire proofing your garden
Gardening in the drought
Community Garden
Community Kitchen
Coffee cake and conversations
Clothes swap service
Carer's support groups
Book club
Movie review group
Dinner and a movie
Film Group
Women's Wellness group
Look Good Feel Good
Women on Farms
Environment action group
Walking together, maybe sharing a song, some art or a story
Women's choir
Collating and publishing your photos
Singing for fun
Organising community activities
Laughter
Arts Renewal
Women's Moon Circles
Fire Guard Group

Grant writing
Improving your work skills
Computer skills
Learn to play a musical instrument
Making children's clothes group
Basic motor mechanics
Learning to use tools for home maintenance
Playgroup
Learning Financial Skills
Women's Investment Club



Ice Breakers - activities for getting groups going

- ◆ Each woman takes something out of her hand bag. Go around and tell what it is and why its there.
- ◆ The first person introduces themselves i.e. clever Claire.
The second person remembers the people before them and then introduces themselves i.e. Clever Claire, Jolly Julie and I'm Super Sally.
Keep going around the group and back to the first person who has to remember everyone.
- ◆ Each woman chats to the person on their left for 2 minutes then introduces the woman on their left and tells something specific about them. – You will need a timekeeper.
- ◆ In pairs tell each other about an energy saving idea you do or have heard about.
- ◆ In pairs talk until you find something you have in common with your partner.
- ◆ In pairs introduce yourselves. Think about when you were 10 years old and describe your dining room table and who is sitting around it for dinner.

Lots of ideas are available on the internet. Type "Icebreakers" into google.

Why use icebreakers?

- Create a positive group atmosphere
- Help people to relax
- Break down social barriers
- Energize & Motivate
- Help people to "think outside the box"
- Help people to get to know one another

Group Rules

Before women get to know each other a bit better it's important for the group to have some ground rules so that everyone feels comfortable with each other and free to speak honestly.

Everyone needs a safe environment in which to be themselves.

Your group needs to develop a short list of rules/ agreements to ensure the best possible environment for the time together.

Ensure these are included

- ❖ **Confidentiality** – our stories and comments are not repeated outside of this workshop
- ❖ **Everyone** has a chance to speak and be listened to
- ❖ **Acceptance** of difference – someone might think differently to you- it doesn't make them wrong

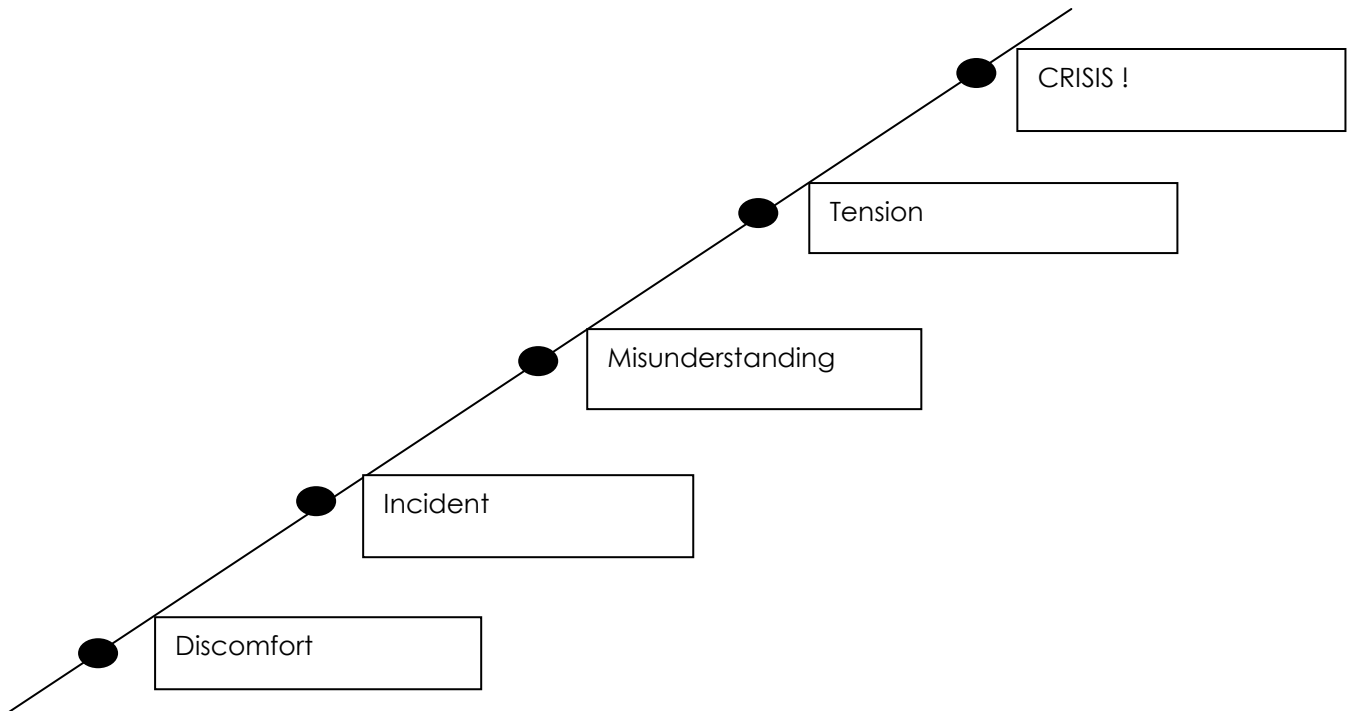
One of the things that will happen is story telling; what women do well is tell stories; about themselves, their lives, their families.

Stories can be funny, sad, tragic or uplifting- it doesn't matter as long as they are shared in the generous spirit with which they are offered and kept safely within these walls.

Sometimes groups experience conflict. Conflict is not always bad and can lead to good outcomes for the group. This is why setting ground rules is so important. Groups can make sure they refer back to them regularly.

Conflict in the Group

Conflict is an opportunity to better a situation or a relationship. When conflict is worked through there is an ultimate benefit for both you and the other party.



Discomforts

Perhaps nothing is yet said. Things don't feel right. It may be difficult to identify what the problem is. Do you feel uncomfortable about a situation, but not quite sure.

Incidents

Here a short, sharp exchange occurs without any lasting internal reaction. Has something occurred between you and someone else that has left you upset, irritated or with a result you didn't want.

Misunderstandings

Here motives and facts are often confused or misperceived. Do your thoughts keep returning frequently to the problem?

Tension

Here relationships are weighted down by negative attitudes and fixed opinions. Has the way you feel about and regard the other person significantly changed for the worse? Is the relationship a source of constant worry and concern?

Crisis

Behaviour is affected, normal functioning becomes difficult, extreme gestures are contemplated or executed. Are you dealing with a major event, like a possible rupture in a relationship?

A Conflict Resolution Method:

1. Treat the other person with respect

Respect for another person is an attitude conveyed by specific behaviours. The way I listen to the other, look at her, my tone of voice, my selection of words, the type of reasoning I use – these either convey my respect or they communicate disrespect.

2. Listen until you “ experience the other side”

One of the best ways to communicate more accurately during disagreements and to resolve conflict is to institute Carl Rogers's rule: “Each person can speak up for himself only after he has first restated the ideas and feelings of the previous speaker accurately, and to that speaker's satisfaction.”

3. State your views, needs and feelings

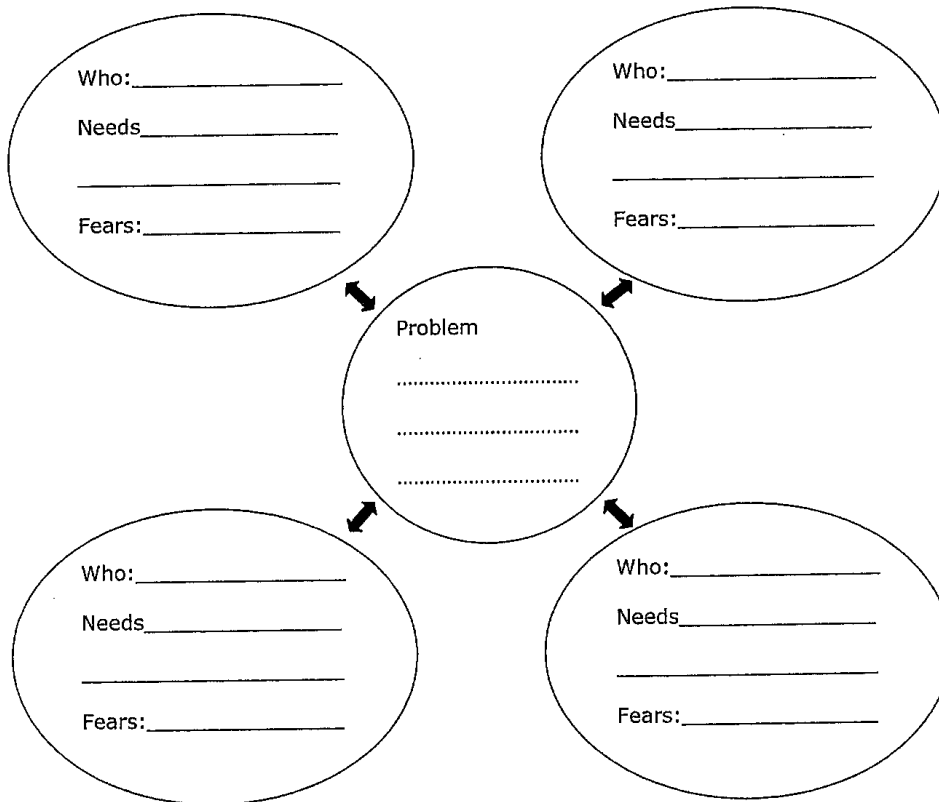
- First, state your point of view briefly, especially during conflict, you will usually communicate better if you keep your message short and to the point.
- Next, avoid loaded words that can be difficult during tense times.
- Third, say what you mean and mean what you say. They may talk about one issue when their real concern centres on another. It is often preferable to state the truth as it really is for you.
- Disclose your feelings. Until the emotional issues are resolved, the substantive issues probably can't be settled. Whether you are talking or listening, the conflict resolution method concentrates especially on the feelings.
- Finally, there are some occasions when Step 3 of the conflict resolution process (stating your own view, needs and feelings) is unnecessary. Sometimes one person is upset and the other is not. When the angry person vents their feelings and is accepted and treated with respect, the conflict may end.

5 Mapping the Conflict

Another very important skill in conflict resolution involves **mapping the conflict**. This method works well when problems are complex and solutions are not clear because of the apparent conflicting interests of a number of people.

The aim of mapping the conflict is to clarify the needs, values and objectives of all the major players involved in the conflict.

Mapping the conflict **allows the participants to see the problem from others' points of view** by identifying their fears and needs.



Problem Solving Together

- Identify the Problem – It is a mistake to think that everyone has the same idea about what the problem is. You may be surprised to hear the different interpretations people have of the problem. If you don't have agreement on what the problem is you will not be able to move through the stages.
- Formulate Goals - keep the goals to no more than three or four. Make sure they are simple and realistic, that is, that there is a strong likelihood that they can be reached.
- Explore the Options – think of a number of different ways of reaching these goals. Keep an open mind to allow for the possibility of previously unthought-of solutions.
- Consider Consequences – list the advantages and disadvantages of each option
- Decide on the Most Appropriate Option – choose the option that has the greatest number of advantages
- Agree on Action – now test out the best option. Work out how you need to go about putting it into action.
- Evaluate the Strategy – evaluate the effectiveness of the chosen option. If it is not successful in solving the problem try one of the other options you discussed.

Some barriers to consider that may prevent women from gathering

Venue

Lack of needed equipment

Transport to the group

Time "When are most people available to come along?"

Not knowing about the group

"Do they feel welcome?"

Gossip

Social reluctance

Caring responsibilities "Do they need childcare or aged care?"

Wheelchair accessibility

Any disabilities

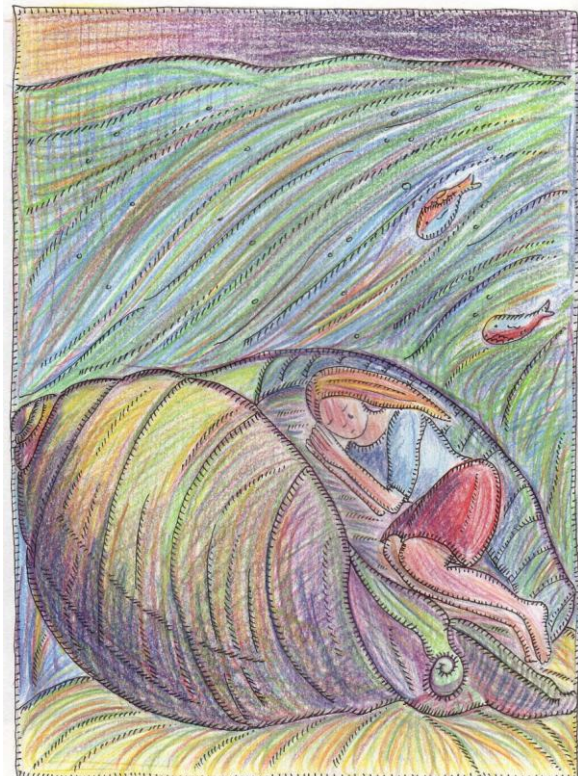
- Hearing
- Vision
- Physical
- Asperger's Syndrome (social disability)
- intellectual

Literacy

Language or cultural differences

Other barriers...

How can we overcome these?



Evaluation

Time and resources are precious.

Evaluation is identifying what has 'worked' and what can be improved.

Not all evaluations need to be written; simply asking the group what they liked or didn't like is fine.

Different ways to evaluate

- Observation: Observing participation, body language
- People returning next time
- Question sheets
- Group discussion
- One to one discussions
- Outcomes over time

Your support worker can assist you to evaluate your group.

Who are 'Traditional Owners'? When do I acknowledge them?

A 'traditional owner' (also called Traditional Custodian, however some communities have specific preferences about which term to use) is an Aboriginal person or group of Aboriginal people directly descended from the original Aboriginal inhabitants of a culturally defined area of land or country and who has or have a cultural association with this country which derives from the traditions, observances, customs, beliefs or history of the original Aboriginal inhabitants of the area.

The following is a generic example of how to acknowledge traditional owners:

'I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land that we stand on today the (insert name) people. I would also like to pay my respects to the Elders past and present.'

In some locations, more than one group may claim traditional ownership or different versions of the name of the traditional owners' clan or community may be in use. If you are in this situation, the acknowledgment may take the following form:

'I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land (or country) on which we stand and pay my respects to their Elders and to the Elders of other Victorian Aboriginal communities.'

What is a 'Welcome to Country' and when should I include it in a function?

'Country' is a term used to describe a culturally defined area of land associated with a particular culturally distinct group of people or nation.

A 'Welcome to Country' is where an Aboriginal custodian welcomes people to their land at the beginning of a meeting, event or ceremony. An appropriate person such as a recognised Elder within the local area needs to conduct this welcome. Welcome to Country enables Traditional Custodians to give their blessing for the event. It is an important mark of respect for Aboriginal people.

What is an Acknowledgment of Country?

Acknowledgment of Country is where other people acknowledge and show respect for the Traditional Custodians of the land on which the event is taking place. It is a sign of respect. Below are two generic statements that are considered appropriate wording for an Acknowledgment of Country (including acknowledging Traditional Owners):

"I would like to acknowledge that we are here today on the land of the (insert local clan) people. The (insert local clan) are the Traditional Owners of this land and form part of the wider Aboriginal nation known as the (insert name of *Nation). I would also like to acknowledge the present Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who know reside in this area."

Paying respect to the first peoples on whose land we are,
Acknowledging the loss of lands, cultures and treasures,
Knowing the consequences for people, communities and nations,
Believing that we can walk together to a better future,
We meet today, taking it on.

*'Nation' refers to a culturally distinct group of people associated with a particularly culturally defined area of land or country. Each nation has boundaries that cannot be changed, and language is tied to that nation and its country.

(*Making Two Worlds Work Information Guide*, WHGNE, 2008)

Key Phone Numbers and Websites

- Women's Information, Referral and Exchange (WIRE) - Free call 1800 136 570 - www.wire.org.au/ WIRE listen to women and give them information, support and referrals via a telephone support service, or email support service.
- Nurse-On-Call 24 Hour Health Advice- 7 days a week - 1300 60 60 24
- The Mental Health Advice Line Phone 1300 280 737 : www.health.vic.gov.au/mhal/
This is a statewide Victorian phone service that provides immediate, expert mental health advice from a registered mental health professional, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- SANE Help Line - Free call 1800 187 263 (Mon-Frid 9am - 5pm) - www.sane.org/
- Suicide Help Line Victoria 1300 651 251
- Lifeline - 24 hour counselling service - Free call 13 11 14
- Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service - Free call 1800 015 188
- Sexual Assault Crisis Line - 1800 806 292
Confidential 24 hr emergency or crisis helpline for victims who have recently been sexually assaulted
- Emergency Accommodation - Free call 1800 825 955
State-wide after hours service
- Gambling Help Hot Line - 1800 156 789
- Action Centre Gay and Lesbian Counselling - Free call 1800 013 952
- Kids Help Line - Free call 1800 55 1800 - www.kidshelp.com.au/
- Child Abuse: Prevention Service - 1800 688 009 24 hour crisis support services for parents
- Child Abuse: Protection - 131 278
- Police - 000
- If on an *out of range* mobile - 112

