



A Project of

LISMORE & DISTRICT WOMEN'S
HEALTH CENTRE INC



Supported by
Lismore City
Council



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Background

- In 2008-9 Lismore & District Women's Health Centre Inc. launched the 'Cut It Out' Project.
- Based on a successful national campaign in the United States, conducted by Salons Against Abuse, the project enlisted the help of local hairdressers to tackle domestic violence in our community.



Local Context

- Domestic violence poses the greatest risk for disease and premature death for Australian women aged 15 - 44 and costs the country \$8 billion each year.

(Access Economics 2004, *The Cost of Domestic Violence to the Australian Economy*)

- Women in rural and regional areas are particularly vulnerable to domestic violence, due to isolation, the presence of firearms and less accessible legal and police resources.

(The Women's Services Network (WESNET) 2000, *Domestic Violence in Regional Australia: A Literature Review*)

- In 2008, Lismore ranked 25th in NSW's top 50 local government areas for recorded domestic violence related assault.

(NSW Government Bureau of Crime Statistics & Research 2008, *NSW Crime Statistics Jan-Dec*

2008)

Community Development

- Based on the community development principles of participation, collaboration and capacity building, Cut It Out worked in partnership with private businesses which are not usually involved in health promotion, to enhance social well-being and improve the community's response to domestic violence.



Why hairdressers?

- Hairdressing salons are a group of small businesses, largely operated by women, who often work in conjunction with masseuses, beauticians and other therapists.
- They often have strong networks or are involved in the local Chamber of Commerce.



Why hairdressers?

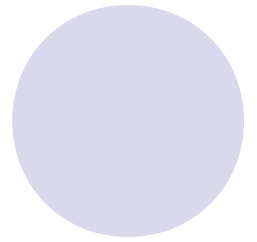
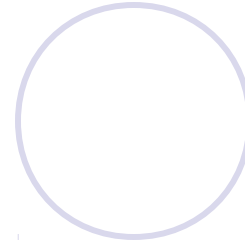
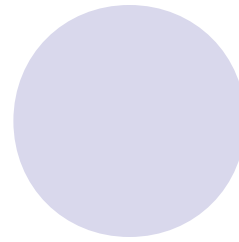
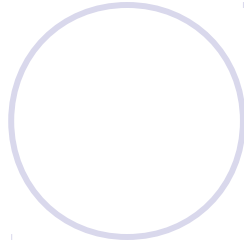
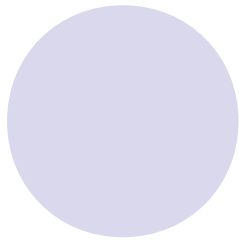
- They are often a point of private, close or nurturing contact for women.
- They build relationships of trust over time with their clients.
- They can even save us from a bad hair day.





Project Aims

- To raise awareness about the nature and prevalence of domestic violence and the supports available in our community.
- To help hairdressers respond appropriately to a woman if she tells her story.
- To help hairdressers recognize and respond to their own compassion fatigue or vicarious trauma.



- Cut It Out sought the assistance of hairdressing salons to distribute information about domestic violence to the community, by handing out self-help mini-brochures to their clients.
- The project provided basic training to hairdressers, so they understand the dynamics of domestic violence and why it is a problem.

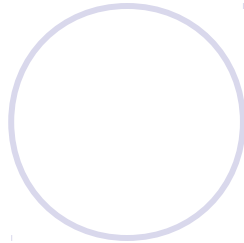
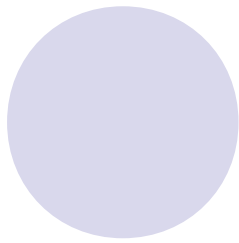


What it didn't do

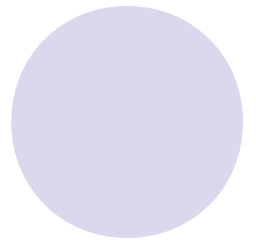
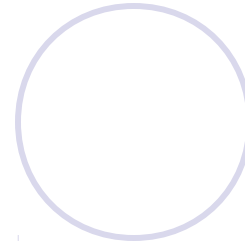
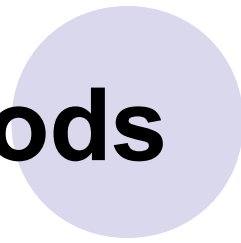
- **Cut It Out did not encourage hairdressers to act as counsellors or replace the work of trained health workers.**

What can a hairdresser do if a client is being abused?

- Understand that domestic violence is a crime
- Believe the person who tells them that they are being abused
- Not attempt to fix the problem or become their counsellor
- Give them a mini-brochure explaining where to get help
- Keep whatever they tell confidential
- Understand the effects of compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma and look after themselves



Methods



The project provided each salon with:

- 2 hour training session for salon staff, in a comfortable setting.
- Mini-brochures (which are not easily identifiable as domestic violence resources) for clients to take home.
- Information kits with resources.
- Follow up support if required.



Scope of the Project

- 19 staff from 5 local salons attended a training session
- 1200 information cards were distributed to salons
- 1 part-time/casual project worker and an advisory committee
- LDWHC worked in partnership on this project with:
 - Lismore City Council's Crime Prevention Officer
 - Northern Rivers Domestic Violence Court Assistance Scheme
 - Lismore Women's & Children's Refuge
 - Northern Rivers ACON
 - Hairdressing salons in Lismore CBD & Nimbin
 - Volunteers from the local community
- The Project was funded by a small initial grant of \$2000 from Lismore City Council and help with printing.



The training format provided:

- Context for the project.
- Time for salon staff to discuss how they would distribute the mini brochures and simple ways to keep some basic statistics.
- Opportunity to anticipate and role play possible responses from salon clients.

Findings: an interesting idea

- The official project launch was held on International Women's Day 2008 and attracted great media attention.
- Interviews on North Coast & Mid North Coast ABC Radio, Radio National, Sydney commercial radio, local TV & newspapers.
- Subsequent strong interest from social and community sector services across NSW and around Australia.

The Impact of the Media



- There was a strong response from local media as the original live radio interview was quickly picked up by other networks.
- The media were attracted to the idea of hairdressers providing advice, so care had to be taken to emphasise that this was not the aim of the project.



Findings: local context

- Unlike their U.S. counterparts, Northern Rivers hairdressers reported few disclosures or obvious signs of physical abuse from their clientele.
- They were more likely to have noticed controlling behaviours such as constant phone texting or verbal abuse.

Did it raise community awareness ?

- Surveys completed by hairdressers who attended the sessions indicated that the most important learning was about the cycle of domestic violence and that good support is available for women locally.



Lessons from Practice

- It is possible to create strong alliances and creative partnerships for health education and health promotion with small businesses.



Lessons continued

- Our project team realised we had not taken enough time initially to understand the hairdressing industry and how it works.
- The private sector is competitive and staff from different salons can feel uncomfortable working together in a training session.

Findings: the communication challenge

- Salons have numerous regular or repeat clients.
- 15-40% of salon clientele are male and staff may feel uncomfortable handing out info to these customers.
- **Finding suitable times and ways to communicate about the project in a busy salon** (in person, by telephone, feedback book, anonymous questionnaire).



Findings: the communication challenge

- **Collecting meaningful statistics**

It was difficult for salon staff to record the number of cards distributed or conversations they held with clients.

- **Adapting social welfare jargon and values to a commercial environment**

Hairdressers could relate health promotion to product promotion, but could not relate easily to the notion of compassion fatigue.

Training staff from one salon together

- The second training was more effective because the owner/ manager of a large family salon organised for all the staff from her business to attend the training together.
- This allowed the staff from the same workplace more time to discuss how they would distribute the mini brochures.



Lessons continued

- It is often the most inexperienced staff member in the salon, e.g. the junior apprentice, who takes bookings and payment. These younger workers lacked confidence to hand out mini info brochures.
- We had to amend our plans when salon staff decided to simply clip the mini brochures to the magazines clients read.



Lessons continued

- Salons have different aesthetic values to the health sector and the appearance of the environment is very important. Salons may not want posters and promotional material on display.



Outcomes

- The biggest impact of the training was on the women as individuals and as friends, family members and colleagues rather than in their role as hairdressers.



Outcomes

- Increased number of people in the community who understand domestic violence is a crime and that help is available locally (capacity).
- Public interest and discussion of domestic violence was generated by the media response.
- The project promoted awareness and dialogue about domestic violence amongst salon staff and clients.



Unexpected Outcomes

- One woman who works as a barber reported regularly witnessing emotional abuse from the female partners of her older male clients.
- A young apprentice disclosed to her parents following the training session that her current relationship was abusive.



Future Possibilities

- This project could easily be adapted to other areas, but it is important to recognise cultural and regional differences. What worked in Lismore might not work in another area of Australia.
- There may be cultural differences between salons in USA and Australia.



Future Possibilities

- The project may work more effectively with services that are offered in a more private setting. Hairdressing salons tend to be open spaces and not conducive to disclosure.
- Practitioners who work one-on-one, such as beauticians and body workers may find their clients are more inclined to disclose personal stories.



Conclusion

- Hairdressers' unique access to women of all ages and walks of life can form a vital link between domestic violence services and the people who may need to use them.