

The Inside Out Drop-in Centre

**A Collaborative Approach to Developing
a Women's Information Website in the
Northern Territory**

- The Women's Information Centre (WIC) was established in Alice Springs in 1984. The WIC Coordinator provided a 'drop-in' service for women where they could borrow books, receive short term counselling, change and breastfeed babies and hold meetings. Reviews (2000, 2004, 2005) showed that the WIC 'drop-in' service was under-utilised and an alternative service delivery model was proposed.

Challenges

- As you are aware, the Northern Territory has its challenges in having accessible services and certainly information available for individuals and service providers
- These challenges are distance, geographical isolation, and service provider decision makers are often not located in close proximity to where clients are.
- Other challenges relate to high turnover in staff, a large number of programmes without sustainable funding and cultural diversity of women within the Territory

- The Office of Women's Policy, Women's Health Strategy Unit and WISe worked together to identify how an information service could address some of the needs arising from those challenges and to be able to provide quality information that was up to date and available to all.
- The Northern Territory Government's policy for women ***Building on Our Strengths: A Framework for Action for Women in the Northern Territory 2008 – 2012*** has 5 key priority areas – Health & Wellbeing, Safety, Economic Security, Leadership and Life Balance and is used as the foundation for information and networking

Getting WISe

- The change in status from a drop in centre for women in Central Australia to a Territory wide information service for all women meant re-defining how the service operates
- This is where information services turn themselves “inside out”
- Previously, women came in to a physical drop in centre
- In order to be relevant and freely accessible for all women,
we need to become a “virtual” drop in centre.

- Its core business is still the provision of information and referral for women not just for Central Australia but for all women in the Northern Territory. The service comes under the management of the Women's Health Strategy Unit and has input into key women's health policy, managing projects, events and programs identified as priorities for women.
- The service is a networking service, participating in community, Territory and national networks. The name of the service is Women's Information Service (WISe) to better reflect the nature of the service and consistent with equivalent interstate women's information services.

Inside Out Drop In Centre

- Alternative pathways to access information for challenging environments
- Being able to post comments, email WISe and a data base of contacts brings information to the households and communities
- More direct communication to enable women's voices to be heard
- Still maintaining the referral services through direct contact with the Coordinator
- Having a shop front service on line as well as physical space
- Ability of Coordinator to link with women regardless of physical location.

Outcomes

- Outcomes show the development of projects where links have been made between services that might not have been identified as partners
- Women's voices are being heard at all levels and consultations between local women and national initiatives are being held
- Representation of women is coordinated and advocacy and lobbying on issues for women and their families is being undertaken
- Women are being empowered to undertake their own projects – feeling of being supported and there is a resource that they can use to make links and access resources. The Strong Women's Project is an example
- Linking with men's issues and health e.g. AFL Saying No to Violence project with WISe and White Ribbon Foundation

Health and Wellbeing

- A current data base is a priority to provide information regarding not just service provision, but also current programmes that run as a part of national, Territory and local government as well as non-government community services
- Notice boards for current activities and events around the Territory
- Information that aids in addressing access and equity for health and wellbeing

- Local events and information regarding family violence and sexual assault
- Links to other sites e.g. Family Violence Clearing House
- Central Australian Family Violence and Sexual Assault Network meeting information, presentations, advocacy and lobbying information
- Lists of workshops, seminars and conferences
- Research and national information

Economic Security

- Ability to access information about education, training, scholarships and research
- Local information e.g. Basics cards, Centrelink links
- Working Women's Centre information and links
- Chamber of Commerce Women in Business

- Currently have a link at www.women.nt.gov.au
- Issues to still consider are:
 - While the majority of women have some access to the internet, there are many who don't.
 - Encouraging service providers to allow access
 - Strong marketing campaign to ensure knowledge of establishment of WISe and the benefits of the service to all women in the Northern Territory