



Supporting women's civic participation

*Developing a meaningful client and
community participation strategy at
Women's Health West*

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Women's Health West (WHW)

- Women's health service for the western metropolitan region
 - *Family violence services*
 - Crisis housing, court support, case management, women's and children's counselling
 - *Health promotion, Research and Development*
 - Equity and Social Justice
 - Sexual and Reproductive Health
 - Mental Wellbeing and Social Connectedness
- Social model of health
- Feminist frameworks



Supporting *women's* community participation

- Imperative for community & client/consumer participation
- Supporting *women's* community participation is *paramount*:
 - Gender-sensitive and responsive services
 - Integral for gender equity
 - Recognised in the UN Convention on all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- Central to WHW's organisational philosophy & strategic vision

Women's *meaningful* community participation

– Barriers and enablers



Women's Health West, 2012

Developing the CCP strategy

- Establishment of the Client & Community Participation (CCP) working group

- Development of a 'participation' definition:

'WHW values women's right to and realisation of participation as integral to equity and justice for women in the west. To achieve this, client and community participation at WHW is a process by which women are involved in the services, programs and organisation of Women's Health West as a whole, through viable and genuine decision-making and/or the ability to influence outcomes that are deemed meaningful to women, by women themselves'.

- An audit of current participation initiatives at WHW



Developing the CCP strategy

Preliminary community consultations – May 2012

What women need in order to participate at WHW

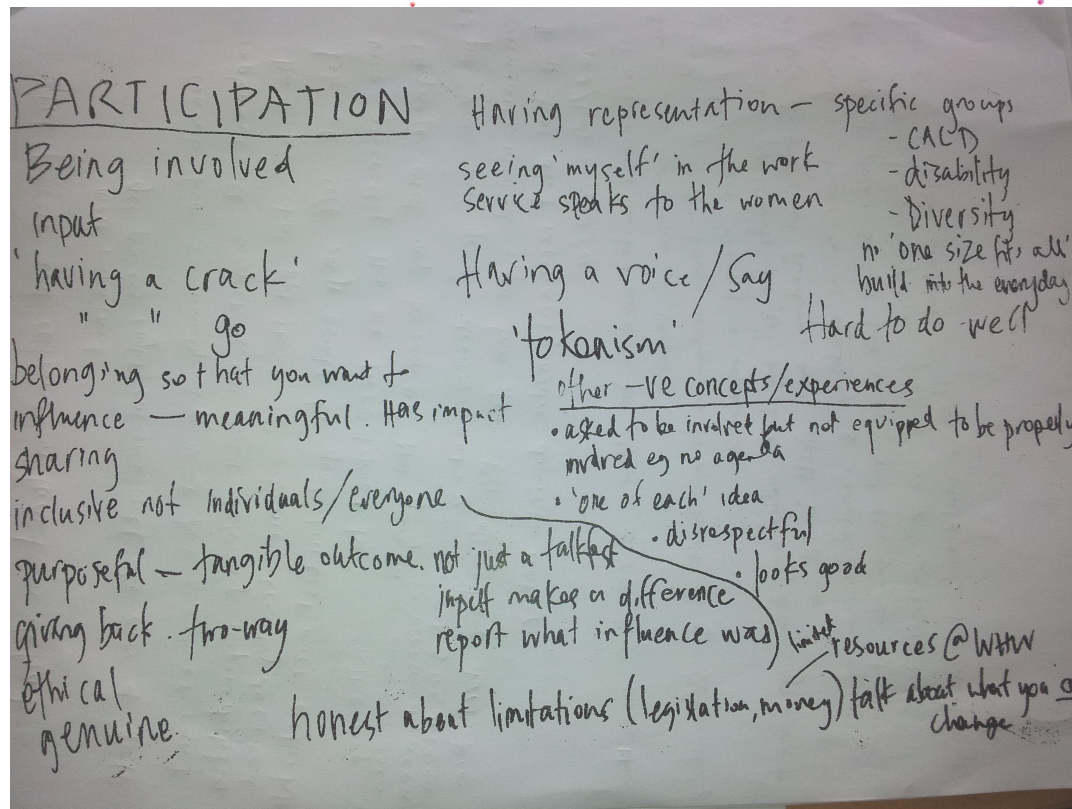
- Time to prepare
- Time to tell their stories
- Different options/methods for participating
- A shared understanding of what 'participation' at WHW is
- Knowledge of what opportunities are available at WHW
- Support around childcare responsibilities
- Supported capacity to actively participate



Developing the CCP strategy

Staff workshop – November 2012

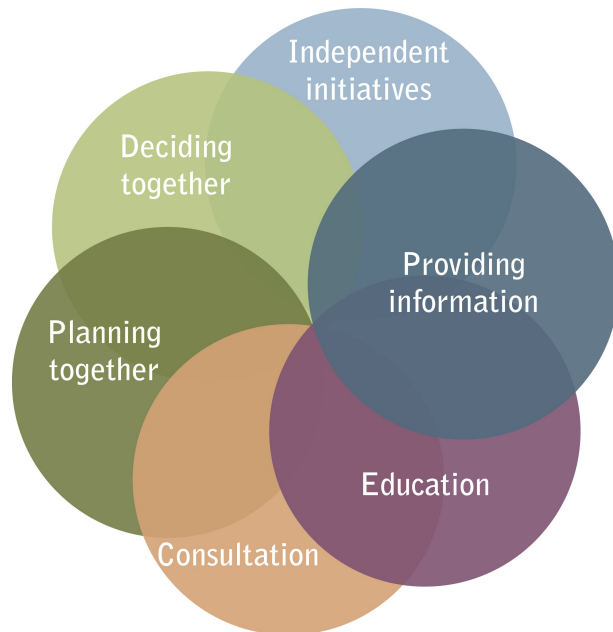
- Part 1 - *Exploring and understanding client and community participation*



Developing the CCP strategy

Part 2 - Naming and recognising client & community participation at WHW

Spheres of participation



Spheres of participation



WHW, 2012 'Spheres of participation model'

Adapted from frameworks developed by Homeground & Rural Housing Network (2008) & Canadian Manitoba Family Services and Housing (2008)

Developing the CCP strategy

Part 2 - Naming and recognising client & community participation at WHW

Spheres of participation model

- Identifying participation
- Strengths
- Limitations
- Key considerations



Guiding principles for the CCP Strategy

**Women's voices,
knowledge and
experiences are valued
and privileged**

'We recognise that women are the experts in their lives; we value and acknowledge women's knowledge and experiences and their contribution to our organisation and the wider community'.

'And then I expect that you are the expert and you come to tell me, and you know everything'
(Community woman from South Sudan, OCOR participant, 2012).

Guiding principles for the CCP Strategy

Women's capacity to engage in participation is supported

“We work to redress barriers to women's participation and to support the capacity of clients and community women to engage in participation opportunities at WHW. We also act to build the capacity of staff in supporting client and community participation’.

*‘She didn't have a place to leave her kids...things like that’
(Community woman, Horn of Africa women's group, 2012).*

*‘Otherwise we are just disempowering people again’
(WHW staff member, 2012).*

Guiding principles of the CCP Strategy

**Diversity is valued
and acknowledged**

‘We recognise and value women’s diversity and their experiences. We also recognise that an inclusive approach to meaningful participation requires various participation methods and opportunities’.

*‘And if anybody finds it hard to talk at these kind of situations, then maybe they could write a letter, or an email’
(Community woman - Sunrise program participant, 2012).*

‘One woman does not represent all women from that population group’ (WHW staff member, 2012)

Guiding principles for the CCP Strategy

Meaningful client and community participation is timely

'We act to support participation that occurs at a time that is viable for clients and the community. We also recognise that meaningful participation requires sufficient time to explore and share ideas and concepts'.

'Its hard for me to answer quickly because I don't have that much education'

(Community woman from South Sudan, 2012)

'Take into account women in crisis – timing is important'
(WHW staff member, 2012)

Next stages of the CCP Strategy...

- Further consultations with community women
- Explore consultations with clients
- 2013 staff workshop
- Refine goals, objectives and strategies
- Participate in a new regional network to support community engagement in the western region of Melbourne.

Thank you

References

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