



*From little seeds strong
trees grow*



Issue 1
June/July 2017

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Chair's Report

By Michele Jarldorn

This is the first Chair's Report in what we hope will be our regular newsletter. What an exciting and successful time for Seeds of Affinity!

Last year was very busy and productive overall. Two developments stand out because they broaden the experience of Seeds women. The first is the launch of our own radio program. The second, which was a highlight for 6 of our women with lived experience, was the chance to participate in the internationally recognised 'Sisters Inside' Conference in Brisbane. This was funded by a special Quiz Night attended by members and supporters. The Conference was also attended by several self-funded members who presented papers about activities here in South Australia. Never missing an opportunity, we sold our very popular fund-raising products at the Conference.



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Last year, more than 70 community groups came together to give overdue public recognition to the issue of children and the life-impacting fallout from the prison environment.

The community consultation included insights from Michael O'Connell (Commissioner for Victims Rights); Malcolm Robinson (highly respected family therapist and director, Bower Place); Linda Fisk (Chair and founder of Seeds of Affinity); Bernie McGinnes (Principal Adviser for Women Offenders Correctional Services); Cheryl Axelby (Chief Executive Officer Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement).

Participants recommended exploring ways of changing processes which damage relationships between mothers and children; producing resources; looking for education opportunities to reduce intergenerational offending and forming a coalition of stakeholders to work toward change.

Liz Walsh from *The Advertiser* wrote the following article (April 12, 2017) (reproduced with permission)

Deborah loves her three children. There's no doubt of that. But even she will admit that she hasn't been the best example to her kids – now aged 31, 18 and 16 – over the years. However, having spend a decade going in and out of the Adelaide Women's Prison for petty drug-related crimes, and losing her children to the foster care system, she has fought hard to regain custody of them and continues her best to turn things around.*

"It's been a struggle – we have our good days and our bad days," she says.

"We are still slowly chipping away (at our

Every woman AND CHILD - A community response to the damage caused by imprisonment

By Andrea Duff

relationship)"

Not only was it difficult getting access to them when she was in jail, but on release there was no departmental support to repair the fractured relationship.

"After release, there is very little support for a women who is already struggling," she says.

"Extended help is needed for women upon release. I think a care plan, starting within the prison when release is near, would be a big help."

Deborah's youngest was born inside the AWP in 2001 and she was able to keep him for the first couple of months inside with her until release.

"I was lucky this was still in place and luckily I could naturally bond..." she says.

Deborah expressed strong concern about the closure of the mothers and babies unit and says "the prison should be kinder and more understanding for young kids and make it more friendly and family focused."

Now 52, Deborah has been on the outside for five years and continues to work hard to repair relationships and make a bright future for her kids and hopes that other incarcerated women do not have to go through what she has been through.

**Deborah is not her real name.*

(Article by Liz Walsh from the Advertiser, April 22, 2017).



Trivia Night

A SPECIAL THANKS TO

Those that supported us by attending our quiz night held on 30th June 2017.

To all the women of Seeds of Affinity for organising the night, the lovely food and the prizes.

The quiz master Graham Brown for donating his time and mastery at presenting.

It was an extremely successful evening.

Participant Profile

Name: Sarah*

How did you hear about Seeds and how long have you been coming?

I heard about Seeds when I was in prison and went to one of the Radio Seeds listening groups. I have been coming for about 8 weeks now.

What are the best aspects of Seeds for you?

I like coming here because I can be myself. There is a great sense of understanding and support here that helps me to build networks and feel that I am not alone

What would you tell another woman about why she should come to Seeds?

Seeds is a place to cook, eat, talk, listen and share.

What about Seeds activities?

I have heard about the summer beach walks and can't wait for the warmer weather, they sound like fun. I have also heard the women talk about their public speaking and I am looking forward to having a go at participating.

Have you learned anything about yourself since coming to Seeds?

I have always been independent and kept things to myself. Since coming here, I have learned that it is ok to ask for support especially if I'm feeling vulnerable.

*Sarah is not her real name.



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During November, our co-founder, Linda Fisk was formally recognised for her contribution to Seeds and the wider community by being named a finalist in the 2017 Local Hero Awards.

Then in December we celebrated our 10th Birthday. Significantly Seeds was invited to a celebration afternoon tea at Parliament House hosted by The Honourable Steph Key. The event was attended by the Member for Florey: Francis Bedford, the Minister for Correctional Services: Peter Malinauskas and many of our women. A second event at Komodo Café in Prospect acknowledged the huge contribution of all members past and present.

In March 2017 we held two planning days, designed and hosted by our board member, Cathy O'Loughlin. Day one was held at Seeds and was a workshop where we consolidated our values, mission and purpose. Day two was held at The Watershed at Salisbury where we created a number of specific actions, our goals for this year.

One of our important achievements has been winning grant funding from both SA Corrections and DCSI. The first DCSI grant in mid-2016, allowed us to purchase desk top computers and laptops which allow us to teach our women basic computer skills and to better manage our administrative tasks. Late in 2016 we won a Community Corrections Grant called the Hadau Project. Hadau is the Welsh word for seeds—the purpose of this 12 month grant is multi-faceted and ground-breaking. In its first six months, Linda and I have been granted access to every section in the AWP to provide Seeds Information Sessions. These sessions allow us to hear directly from women about what services and supports they would like from us. The sessions are then the basis for the following six months of Hadau when we will develop workshops inside the AWP and longer term resources and programs for the community at Seeds.

Having a criminal record is known to be a significant barrier to employment in an already difficult job market. The Hadau Project has allowed us, for the first time, to meet one of the main missions of Seeds, preparing women for employment. We are now providing part-time paid



From little seeds strong trees grow

Seeds of Affinity supports and empowers women both during and upon their release from prison. Women meet twice a week to make skin care products and gourmet treats, share their stories and connect together. The Seeds women have achieved a great deal since they first met in 2006. Some attend university, they are sought after for their public speaking and they have their own radio program. They provide childcare for women in prison and advocate for a more humane environment for children.

Most importantly the Seeds women feel a sense of belonging, solidarity and self-worth during the difficult transition from leaving prison and re-entering the community.

New look website

Our website is looking as good as we feel!

Refreshed and welcoming seedsofaffinity.org.au keeps you as up-to-date as our facebook page, Seeds of Affinity Pathways for Women Inc.

With the latest news and events, stories and online shopping take a browse and learn more about us.

(Continued)

positions for two of our women as community development officers.

A third successful grant from DCSI will allow us to expand on the Prison Pack Initiative. We have redesigned the 'Dear Sista' letter and have created a business card specifically for the packs.

Importantly, we are hearing from the women behind the walls that they are thankful for the prison packs of toiletries that they receive from us. Overall our reputation as a best-practice, women-focused organisation is growing.

Other initiatives focus on increasing the effectiveness of the Board and ensuring that our work is clearly focused on women's needs. We are holding quarterly Board Meeting at Seeds to increase the input of our women. Two, Fiona and Amity, have become regular contributors at monthly Board meetings. We have also expanded Board membership with the welcome addition of three new Board members, Holly Giblin, Kylie Ellis and Julie-Anne Toohey.

This year is already shaping up well with good numbers of women attending weekly, 'Radio Seeds', a growing demand for Seeds products, regular speaking events and the grants. Thank you to all, especially our women and our members. We hope you can join us at the Seeds Quiz Night at Semaphore on June 30th.



NEW! Radio Seeds!

By Dr Heather Anderson

Seeds of Affinity has an exciting new project – our own radio show called “Radio Seeds”. It features many of our women as presenters and aims to support both women in prison and those who have recently left. We hope it also reaches the wider community with its stories about the issues faced by women with a criminalised history and their ways of rebuilding their lives.

“Radio Seeds” broadcasts on the first Friday of every month on WOW-FM 100.5FM from 3 - 4pm (Adelaide time). If you're not in the local area you can tune in online at wowfm.org. We also podcast both the whole show and each segment – sign up [HERE](#) to our newsletter to get an update every month, or you can [like us on Facebook](#)..

<http://eepurl.com/cL0FaD>

(that's the hyperlink for the newsletter if it gets lost)



Lunch at Seeds: food for living

By Helen Johnston

Lunch is the welcoming centrepiece of every Tuesday and Friday Seeds gathering. Fresh free wholesome food cheerfully prepared by our women in our kitchen.

Come to Seeds and do lunch. Everyone is welcome. Can't cook? Doesn't matter. Want to help? That's great. Don't want to help, so what would you like to do? Want to simply watch this time? That's okay.

If you come to Seeds you will be invited to sit down with us and share a little of your time and perhaps a bit of you as well. Lunches are full of plans and possibilities. And if you have nothing to say that's fine too: there are others who have plenty to share.

Seeds lunches allow each of us to be our best and kindest selves.

Guest speaking engagement

Seeds of Affinity offers quality guest speakers with years of experience in talking about what they do.

The format and length of our talks can vary to fit your organisation's needs plus we like to make time for audiences to ask questions as a group and for people to talk informally with our speakers after the session.

For further information please read the [guest speaker price list](#) (available on our website) and [contact us](#) to discuss your group's or organisation's needs.



Speaking engagement at Hendon

The Sisters Inside Conference

By Fiona Woollard

The International Sisters Inside Conference 'Is prison obsolete?' in Brisbane, October 2016 and was attended by 9 Seeds of Affinity women, 6 of us were women with lived prison experience. It was unforgettable: exciting, inspiring, uplifting and informative. Being there together as a group was amazing. One of our funded delegates wrote:

Thank you Sisters for this opportunity to feel connected. The energy ...was electric and I am so thankful to have been able to attend and start on a new journey.

The conference started with the simple acknowledgement that most women facing the criminal justice system have complex needs and have been traumatized.

Imprisonment won't assist them in addressing these issues. The International speakers showed us that there are more creative and effective ways of managing women in the criminal justice system than those used now. Speakers reported on initiatives around the world trying to change things for the better. Three of our own delegates presented workshops which were well attended.

What was great was that women with lived prison experience were able to feel safe in saying what it is they face. They were able to speak to their experience inside and upon release as a period of extreme pressure and stress. Their voices and their suggestions were not judged but heard and respected.



Anna and Fiona at the airport



International and National Keynote speakers



Announcement of Linda Fisk
2017 Local Hero

About Seeds

Seeds of Affinity meet every Tuesday 11-3pm and Friday 12-3pm in the Uniting Church, 146 Semaphore Road, Exeter.

At Seeds of Affinity, we support women and their children during the difficult transition of leaving prison and re-entering the community.

We support Indigenous and non-Indigenous women by providing them with the opportunity to participate in group activities twice a week.

We make beauty products, gourmet treats and textiles, share a meal together and discuss ways to contribute meaningfully in the community by gaining skills, accessing support services and participating in the workforce.

Seeds of Affinity

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Visit us at seedsofaffinity.org.au

Like us on facebook Seeds of Affinity
Pathways for women



Seeds of Affinity began in 2006 by a group of South Australian women with lived prison experience who were inspired to work together to challenge the ongoing stigmatisation faced by women leaving prison and their children, and to build a community where women felt a sense of belonging, solidarity and self worth.

We enjoy the sense of togetherness in the group. We remind ourselves and each other that we are unique and valuable human beings.

The group helps us to find pathways to be free, through hearing new ideas and exploring different perspectives.

Any criminalised woman is welcome at Seeds of Affinity. Different women have different needs. We each want to participate at different levels and in different ways.

We aim to provide credible support to all women, regardless of their needs. We want to help both ourselves and each other with our inner (emotional) development and our outer (practical) development.

We all have great potential to succeed in life. To realise our potential, we need practical support and opportunities to learn and grow.