



# CHOOSE CHANGE EVALUATION BRIEF

Communicare commissioned Eric Dillion Consulting to evaluate the efficacy of Choose Change, an early intervention family and domestic violence and abuse (FDVA) program. At the time of the evaluation in March 2022, Choose Change had been in operation for 18 months, with the final report issued in July 2022.

Since September 2020, Communicare has delivered Choose Change in collaboration with the Family and Domestic Violence Response Team (FDVRT) of the Armadale Police District to enhance system responses to FDVA. The Armadale FDVRT is comprised of Family Violence Officers, Ruah Community Services' Coordinated Response Service (CRS) and Department of Communities Child Protection and Family Support (Communities). Starick, a not-for-profit organisation supporting women and children, is also a member of the Armadale FDVRT but is not engaged in Choose Change activities.

Each FDVRT participant is responsible for engaging specific individuals involved in a FDVA incident. The Family Violence Officers and Communicare Choose Change facilitators engage perpetrators, CRS provides victim support, and the Department of Communities largely manages child protection issues as well as offering support and referral to victims of abuse.

“ I'm feeling really positive about this program and have just passed my month sober mark so a little hooray for me. I just wanted to say thank you for your help with my situation thus far.

- Former Choose Change Participant

## Summary of Key Findings

The evaluation conducted by Eric Dillon consulting concluded:



The collective use of outcome assessments, feedback forms, participant interviews and case studies provide strong evidence of program effectiveness.



Participants demonstrated increased awareness of FDVA generally and increased awareness of the impacts of FDVA on children, women and men.



Choose Change successfully targets and engages Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) participants.



Armadale Police district reported a 15.6% reduction in police interventions from September 2020 to February 2022. While not solely attributable to program, police representatives consider Choose Change to have made a significant contribution.



Reductions in police contact related to FDVA for participants evaluated were observed, where 62% had no further contact



and 21% had halved or less contact.



Participant feedback was overwhelmingly positive: One stated they did not know where they would be if they hadn't attended. Others stated it was 100% beneficial and had changed their life. One also stated he believed Choose Change had helped him to be a better Dad.

## Participant Feedback



This is the first time someone has taken the time to listen to me, which means so much.



I learnt about behaviour, others' values and opinions are important too and argument or winning is not the important thing in a relationship.



Learning to control my emotions. Actively listen. Being respectful to myself and others when communicating.



I finally feel hopeful that I can be a good husband and father.



Being able to talk to someone impartial and have explained a better way or how others can perceive actions/needs.

## Methods

The evaluation encompassed a comprehensive review of Choose Change structure, activities and outcomes, centring examinations on:

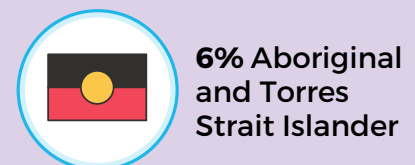
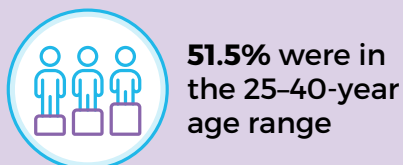
- Governance
- Content and operation
- Performance

Choose Change engaged **132 participants** from September 2020 to February 2022 and **63 participants** were engaged in eight-month follow-up interviews from their initial assessment. Note the minimum eight-month time lapse limited sample size to 63 participants for the follow-up interviews.

Data was further drawn from the 22 participants who completed two or more Outcomes Star Change Star assessments, providing a snapshot of a participants' change over time on key outcome areas.

## Demographics

Of the total 132 engaged, participants were:



## Measures

- Interviews with participants who met eight months minimum for post engagement in service.
- Armadale Police District data on overall FDVRT incidents and frequency of offending for program participants.
- Examination of Outcomes Star evaluation tool for participants completing two or more Change Star assessments. Change Star measures behaviour change across six domains including taking responsibility, thinking and attitudes, safe actions and reactions, communication, being a good father, and wellbeing.
- Interviews with Communicare staff involved in the governance, management and implementation of the Program.
- Interviews with Armadale FDVRT members.
- Review of Program documentation.

Success was defined by:

1. Increases in FDVA education of client cohorts on impact and use of violence.
2. Enhancement of early-intervention strategies of FDVA to priority client cohorts.
3. Decreases in number of police contacts over service delivery period and decreases in severity/frequency of offending.

## Conclusions

The evaluation demonstrated Choose Change is making a positive difference in achieving its stated objectives including an impact on men's use of violence and abuse. The evaluator further noted that the launch of Choose Change during the height of difficulties associated with COVID-19 pandemic underpins the creditworthiness of achieving useful results for a number of participants.

Outcomes Star data demonstrated participants increased awareness of FDVA generally and increased awareness of the impacts of FDVA on children, women and men:

- Of 22 participants that completed at least 2 assessments, 73% reported progress in at least one outcome area, 50% in at least 2 outcome areas, 50% in at least 3 outcome areas
- Greatest impact in improvements in "wellbeing" (59%), safe actions and reactions (50%), taking responsibility and communication (41%), being a good father (36%), and thinking and attitudes (32%).

Evaluator interviews with participants revealed:

- Participants acknowledged their pattern of behaviour. All participants reported their listening and communication skills had improved and felt they had learned new ways to improve thinking and behaviour.
- Participant feedback was overwhelmingly positive: One stated they did not know where they would be if they hadn't attended. Others stated it was 100% beneficial and had changed their life. One also stated he believed Choose Change had helped him to be a better Dad.

Data from the Armadale Police District revealed:

- A 15.6% reduction in police interventions from September 2020 to February 2022. While not solely attributable to program, police representatives consider Choose Change to have made a significant contribution.
- In eight months follow up from initial assessment, reductions in police contact related to FDVA for participants evaluated were observed where 62% had no further contact and 21% had halved or less contact.
- Sergeant McLaren of the Armadale FDVRT noted the skills transfer that has occurred among the FDVRT as a result of Choose Change, including a change in language used with perpetrators.



Using the examples above I can say that Choose Change will have had a positive impact on the reduction (in FDV) the district is currently experiencing.

- Sergeant McLaren

Evaluator interviews with Communicare staff and the Armadale FDVRT revealed:

- Unanimous belief Choose Change has enhanced FDVRT work and provided valuable intervention to lower risk FDVA perpetrators.
- Unanimous belief Choose Change filled a gap in interventions for FDVRT. It was highlighted prior to Choose Change, there were no alternatives for low-risk perpetrators and thus the program played an important early intervention role.
- Agreement Choose Change assisted in making perpetrators visible and increased capacity to hold perpetrators accountable.
- Agreement Choose Change should continue as a program and if possible, extended to other Police Districts.

Review of governance, content and operation revealed Choose Change:

- Was well-adapted to relevant needs.
- Successfully implemented early implementation strategies including completion of initial risk assessments and safety plans for 100% of participants. These tools were continually reassessed throughout the program for each participant.
- Established systems for information sharing and program review and improvement.
- Stakeholders have appropriate level of understanding.
- Established clear risk framework.
- Employed and trained suitable staff to deliver the program.

