

Aboriginal Women with Dependent Children Leaving Prison Project: Needs Analysis Report

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Aboriginal Women with Dependent Children Leaving Prison Project Needs Analysis Report

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January 2008

**Auspiced by Homelessness NSW
Commissioned by WSSPAH**



**NSW Department of
Community Services**



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Aboriginal Women with Dependent Children Leaving Prison project

Needs Analysis Report

Executive Summary

Aims and objectives

This project investigates the transitional and post release needs of Aboriginal women with dependent children who are exiting prison in Western Sydney. It aims to understand their needs; appropriate services available and service gaps in the area, in order to recommend a service model and evaluation framework addressing these needs. In the longer term it is to inform a supported housing pilot project for this group of women and their children.

Brief Background

Aboriginal women experience the fastest rate of increase of all groups of prisoners in NSW. They have higher rates of return to prison, higher numbers of dependent children and higher rates of social and physical disadvantage than their non-Aboriginal counterparts. Post-release supported housing is crucial to reducing recidivism and assisting ex-prisoners to reintegrate into the community. These women have specific and special housing and other needs that are not currently being met. The literature suggests that an Aboriginal women-run case management approach could provide a policy and program framework. The Western Sydney Strategic Plan Against Homelessness (WSSPAH) set up a steering committee and reference group to guide this needs analysis that was auspiced by Homelessness NSW.

Methodology

This needs analysis is informed by social inclusion, rehabilitative, strengths based, Indigenous cultural and women specific theoretical perspectives. A literature review was undertaken. A qualitative method, employing purposive surveys of agencies and interviews with Aboriginal women prisoners, and a

range of workers, was used. The analysis was guided by a project logic. Service availability was compared with the needs evident from the analysis of the interviews and literature.

The project model

Part One of the model reflects thematic areas, drawn from the literature, for data collection and reflects the theoretical underpinnings of the project. It maps key areas in the lives of Aboriginal women with dependent children exiting prison and allows for the women and workers' views to shape its content. Part Two maps these themes as well as data gathered from agencies in a multi-level frame to create a holistic analytic approach to the project in the longer term. The model also allows for Results Accountability or Action Research cycles for the pilot project.

Results

Service Delivery: Agency analysis and mapping

Fifty-five agencies were contacted and 27 responded. Agencies were broken into five categories based upon the information they provided.

1. High-level support
2. Medium-level support
3. Occasional support
4. Other
5. For Children and young people

Women's needs

Seventeen Aboriginal women in prison were interviewed about their experiences pre and post prison for this project. Six themes relating to their areas of highest concern and need emerged from their interviews: their dependent children; housing; family, friends and associates; alcohol and other drugs; their culture; and trauma. They recognised their need for strong integrated services addressing all these areas pre and post-release to assist them to escape from the criminal justice net.

Community Correctional officers, Aboriginal correctional workers and Aboriginal legal service officers were interviewed. Their perceptions tallied with the women's views and although expressed differently covered the same

areas. They were unanimous in pinpointing the lack of appropriate integrated service support.

Needs of Dependent Children

To date there is no research available on the specific ongoing complex needs of dependent Aboriginal children whose mothers are exiting prison.

Nevertheless it was agreed by all that dependent children of Aboriginal women in prison have their own set of needs and culturally appropriate services that recognize and address their often disrupted development, schooling and parenting are needed desperately.

Service Capacity compared to Aboriginal women with dependent children's needs leaving prison

Western Sydney has a strong base upon which to build case managed supported accommodation and a number of Aboriginal specific services such as health, education, legal and personal support are keen and have capacity to link with such a program. There are serious gaps such as in Aboriginal and women specific employment, AOD and mental health services. The lack of Aboriginal children's services that could accommodate these particular children is of serious concern.

Future Planning and Opportunities

The Service model

The most effective model is a lead agency – the housing manager *and* case management service for the client group – working in collaboration with 4-5 other key agencies and linking with specific services as appropriate. This would provide a wrap-around supporting service. Housing that accommodates women who are in process of regaining custody of their children as well as those living with their children is necessary. Specific Western Sydney services are recommended for this task, as are key roles and responsibilities. Specific MOUs are recommended.

Potential Barriers such as poor communication and lack of service capacity and skills are addressed and recommendations made.

Evaluation Reporting

An Evaluation framework, using the project logic model developed throughout the needs analysis and an action research method, is suggested. This is at, at

least, two levels – evaluation of the lead agency and its relations with supporting agencies and evaluation of experience of and outcomes for the client. Training for workers in this evaluation approach is recommended.

Introduction

This report evidences, for the first time in Australia, the disjuncture between the needs of Aboriginal women with dependent children leaving prison and the style and availability of services expected to address those needs. It maps not just the gaps in services but just as importantly the type of service with which these women would and could engage. It also maps the points at which service and support for the women and their children will be needed: from entry into prison to well after release. In short, the analysis overwhelmingly points to the need for an Aboriginal women and children specific flexible model, with a continuum of support services and programs available to meet the women and their children's needs in their current circumstance. It has, at its heart, a continuum of service and stable, supported housing upon release. In the absence of any substantial literature, policy or models addressing this need, this report outlines an innovative model drawn from general good practice elsewhere, the rich information provided by Aboriginal women prisoners and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal workers in the field and information provided by agencies and services in Western Sydney.

The project for which this needs analysis and model has been prepared is a proposed trial of an 'Aboriginal women with dependent children leaving prison' supported accommodation service. For this project to be successful government and non-government agencies will need to commit specific resources in their field of expertise and a small number of services and agencies will need to be partners with the agency that runs the trial project. A number of suitable agencies have indicated their willingness and enthusiasm to be engaged in this way. Crucially, the project will need the enthusiastic support of the Aboriginal community and in particular Aboriginal women leaders in Western Sydney. These women leaders have indicated their willingness to support the project and to be engaged in a genuine partnership amongst Government agencies, other non-Indigenous and Indigenous agencies and the Aboriginal community.

As outlined briefly below, virtually nothing is making a dent in the extraordinarily high return rate of Indigenous women to prison. Because the model proposed is fundamentally informed by the Indigenous women and workers themselves it has the potential to be owned by the Aboriginal women and Indigenous communities in Western Sydney, to provide these women with a way out of the prison cycle and a means by which to support and protect their children as well. It potentially provides a transferable model for Indigenous women-specific programs in other parts of NSW. It is the first of its kind in Australia: an exciting, socially just partnership amongst NSW government and non-government agencies and Indigenous communities to the benefit of Aboriginal women and their children.

Background to this needs analysis

This Needs Analysis aspect of the whole project addressing Aboriginal women with dependent children being released from prison, emerged from the recognition by the Western Sydney Strategic Plan Against Homelessness (WSSPAH) of the lack of information upon which to base a support service for these women. The WSSPAH set up a steering committee and reference group to guide the project.

HomelessnessNSW received funding from the Department of Community Services (DOCS) to conduct this needs assessment as a precursor to the pilot project. An Expression of Interest (see Appendix 1) document was released in December 2006 and in late March 2007 A/Professor Eileen Baldry was engaged as the consultant to undertake the needs analysis.

Aims and objectives

This project investigates the transitional and post release needs of Aboriginal women with dependent children who are exiting prison in Western Sydney. Its aims are to understand their specific and complex needs and the current

appropriate government and non-government services available and service gaps in the area, in order to establish modes of service provision which might better support these women during their transition into the community.

This research identifies existing and potential sources of support for Aboriginal women with dependent children exiting prison located in the areas and communities in which the pilot project housing is to be located. The value of this research lies in its ultimate goals, that of the improved well-being of these women and their children and their move out of the criminal justice system.

Based on this needs analysis and service mapping, a model is developed to guide a pilot supported accommodation program to assist Aboriginal women with their children in their transition to and settlement in the community post-release.

The final aim of this project is to develop a results based accountability frame for the pilot project.

Brief Background

There has been a dramatic rise in the rate of Aboriginal women prisoners in NSW over the past 15 years and a concomitant rise in their rate of release to the community post-prison. Indications are that they are the least likely of all groups of prisoners to find or engage with appropriate housing and support services post-release, particularly if they have dependent children. They therefore return to prison faster and at a higher rate than others.

Aboriginal women represent approximately 30% of the NSW women's prison population in comparison to their rate of approximately 2% of the general NSW female population. They have higher rates of return to prison, have higher numbers of dependent children, higher rates of mental health disorders, experience higher rates of domestic and sexual violence and higher

rates of homelessness than their non-Aboriginal counterparts (Lawrie 2003; Butler and Milne 2003; Baldry & Maplestone 2005; Baldry et al 2006). They also return to highly disadvantaged communities/suburbs with little in the way of housing support, protection from violence, employment opportunities or appropriate health care (Vinson 2007; Baldry 2005; Baldry et al 2006). These women experience the intergenerational and direct effects of decades of exclusionary policies such as child-removal, removal from land, inferior education, housing and health services. They have been disproportionately over-represented amongst those in state care, in juvenile detention, in psychiatric institutions and in prisons (Lawrie 2003; Baldry & Green 2002). They have often been excluded from participating in decision making about their lives and futures.

From the literature reviewed, it is clear that stable and supported post-release housing is crucial to reducing recidivism and assisting ex-prisoners to reintegrate into the community. It is also apparent that Aboriginal women leaving prison in NSW have specific and special housing and other social and personal needs that are not currently being met. There is though a dearth of research or analysis about best practice services and support relating to Indigenous women. In fact there was no literature providing evaluative evidence of successful approaches to working with Indigenous women post-release.

The literature, by extrapolation from mainly generic post-release research and evaluation, suggests that an emphasis on throughcare and aftercare delivered through an Aboriginal women-run case management approach; a focus on the particular issues facing Aboriginal women; and a holistic philosophy underpinning post-release services could provide a policy and program framework. This is assessed and modified in the light of the information provided by Indigenous women, workers and agency participants, in this current needs analysis.

An extended literature review substantiating these conclusions is attached in Appendix 2.

Methodology

This needs analysis is informed by social inclusion, rehabilitative, strengths based, Indigenous cultural and women specific theoretical perspectives. Aspects of social inclusion theory posit that those who have experienced multiple forms of exclusion from social and community benefits, such as sound educational backgrounds, safe and appropriate accommodation, good health care, protection as children and employment opportunities are more likely to be caught up in the criminal justice system. They are also likely to experience ongoing disadvantage, exclusion and involvement in that system unless there is dedicated intervention. A rehabilitative perspective takes it that persons caught in vicious cycles such as in crime, drugs and violent relationships can be assisted to move to positive cycles of living. A strengths based perspective takes as a fundamental starting point that everyone has personal and social capacities upon which to build positive life experiences. An Indigenous cultural perspective recognises the extensive disruption and violence done to Indigenous Australian peoples and their cultures since 1788 and their need to reclaim their cultural pride and esteem. It therefore recognises the inappropriateness for Indigenous Australians of many non-Indigenous interventions especially those related to criminal justice. Women specific perspectives, especially as related to the criminal justice system, recognise the significantly different paths into, trajectories taken through and throughcare needs of women compared to men in the criminal justice system. This needs analysis uses these perspectives to build the project model and inform its data gathering, analysis and recommendations for the trial.

A qualitative research methodology that values and focuses on the meaning and patterning of a human situation and circumstance rather than the quantitative aspects (for example number of persons involved), was chosen as the more suitable for this type of information gathering and analysis. It applies inductive reasoning to non-numeric information to develop concepts and ideas, then to look for similar concepts across information from different persons or sources to most accurately represent the situation.

All samples were purposively not randomly selected to ensure the inclusion of as many relevant agencies, workers and Aboriginal women prisoners as possible.

Ethics

Ethics permission was gained from both the Department of Corrective Services and the University of NSW Ethics Committees to gather documentary information and conduct interviews. All interviews were conducted only after informed consent had been gained.

Methods

A number of qualitative methods were used to collect and analyse the information. The analysis was guided by a project logic model, outlined at the end of the methods section.

Agency information

Relevant agencies, both government and non-government, were invited to provide information on the nature and extent of their services. Such agencies were identified via information provided by the Steering Committee, workers in the field and direct inquiry by project staff. They included Western Sydney government and non-government agencies that may or may not work directly with Aboriginal women with dependent children exiting prison. All those agencies that provide services that currently are or potentially could be of assistance to this group were approached. They include community organisations that work specifically with Aboriginal communities and women, and a wide range of government agencies that work with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women and children. These agencies were invited to share documentary data about the resources, numbers of women served and the geographical range of the services (see Appendix 3). Selected organizations, based on their potential importance to Aboriginal women with dependent children leaving prison were invited to participate in a short, structured

interview to determine in more detail what they were able to provide and their interest in being involved in the trial (see Appendix 3).

Analysis

The collected data was categorised and mapped, using the model outlined at the end of this section, to provide clarity as to what services are available and their location and reach; in other words what needs they were able to or potentially able to meet. This data was later compared with the needs that emerged from the interviews with the women, Aboriginal workers and Community Correctional staff.

Interviews with Aboriginal women in prison

Interviews were conducted with women residing at Emu Plains and Dilwynia Correctional Centres and Bolwara Transitional Centre. A non-random purposive sampling technique, that selects participants according to the specific criteria required by the project (i.e. Aboriginal women inmates with dependent children leaving prison in the following six months), was employed in the selection of participants. This technique required an appropriate Correctional staff member to identify women with these characteristics. All who met the criteria were invited to participate and participation was voluntary. The interviews were conducted by Neva Collings, an Indigenous woman lawyer with extensive experience in interviewing techniques. She was assisted by Theresa French, the Indigenous woman project worker with Penrith Women's Refuge.

Aboriginal women inmates who met the selection criteria were invited by a DCS welfare or Aboriginal Liaison Officer, as decided by the Correctional Centre's superintendent, to participate. Seventeen women in all volunteered for the interview. Those who agreed were given the option of a one-on-one or a focus group interview. The interviews, with consent, were either recorded using hand written detailed notes or digitally audio-recorded depending upon

what the prison authority permitted and the women agreed to. The interviews and focus groups took place in a quiet space nominated by Correctional management. Time was spent prior to the commencement of the interview discussing the goals of the project, reading aloud the participant information and consent forms, and answering any questions the participants might have had about the research. Participants were asked to sign an informed consent form. Where they wished to participate but did not wish to sign a consent form, participants were asked to state their consent to participate verbally. A DCS staff member or one of the project workers was required to witness the signing of consent forms, but the actual interviews were not witnessed by anyone other than the researchers and participants. At the conclusion of the interviews, participants were given a further opportunity to ask questions about the research and were also offered the opportunity to seek welfare or counselling if the interview had been in any way distressing for them.

The interviews were semi-structured in design (Appendix 4). Demographic information was gathered using closed questions and further information regarding need was sought using semi-open and open-ended questions. However, the interviews were not limited only by these questions. The researchers conducting the interviews also utilised techniques such as 'the unscheduled probe' to explore additional information provided by participants. This approach respects the preference for presenting information in the narrative format favoured by many Aboriginal women.

Addressing the needs of Aboriginal women leaving prison is a focus of this research, and of the proposed pilot project. It is frequently the case that the voices of Aboriginal women prisoners are overlooked in the design of the programs that are intended to assist them. It is hoped that by including the opinions, ideas and experience of Aboriginal women prisoners, any post-release program designed as an outcome of this research will be more effective at meeting the needs of this marginalised population.

Although this research does not rely on a representative sample it was anticipated that by interviewing between 15 and 20 Aboriginal women with

dependent children, the interviews would have the capacity to capture the range of similar experiences for Aboriginal women leaving custody, as well as the capacity to explore specific variations on these experiences.

Analysis

The women's comments were analysed using a thematic approach – that is themes that were evident across the interviews were identified and a more detailed understanding of these themes was gained by exploring what the women said about each issue.

Interviews with workers

Relevant Community Corrections' (Blacktown and Penrith) managers were asked to nominate appropriate staff (approximately 1-3 in each office) to be interviewed. Interviews explored staff members' knowledge of the needs of Aboriginal women with dependent children leaving prison including their experience of linking the women with appropriate services (Appendix 5). Community Corrections officers who agreed to be interviewed, were contacted by a researcher to arrange an interview time. Before the interview each officer was given the information and consent form and was only interviewed if they gave informed consent. Interviews were held in a community corrections office and the interview was recorded. These recordings were transcribed and the texts analysed. These interviews were conducted by A/Professor Eileen Baldry.

The aim of the interviews with the community corrections staff was to seek these workers' experiences of and views on the situation for Aboriginal women who are exiting custody and who have dependent children.

In addition the Indigenous Project Worker organised meetings with Aboriginal women correctional staff. This meeting was attended by researchers and was recorded with the information transcribed. Further, the Project Worker and

the Indigenous interviewer were able to conduct a focus group with Aboriginal Legal Service solicitors in Western Sydney. Again the meeting was recorded and transcribed. These focus groups explored the participants' experiences of working with Aboriginal women with dependent children leaving prison and the agencies and services with which they attempt to engage.

Analysis

As with the women prisoner interviews the workers' comments were analysed using a thematic approach.

The project model

The data was analysed using project logic. A project logic model is a graphic display or 'map' of the relationship between a program's resources, activities, and intended results, which also identifies the program's underlying theory and assumptions (Kaplan and Garrett 2005).

In the case of this research a model facilitating the mapping of the experiences of Aboriginal women with dependent children exiting prison in a holistic framework was used. Because one of the aims of this report is to outline a possible pilot project model, the researchers believed it was important to use a model that:

- Assists with data collection
- Helps to map current and future services
- Is complex enough to map the lives of the women group, but simple enough to read and understand
- Can be used in a variety of ways – i.e. as an evaluation as well as a mapping model

A model that has been already used in analysis, as well as service delivery with socially marginalised communities was implemented¹. The model was adapted for the specifics of this project. It was presented to the project Community Reference Group and Steering Committee where it was approved in the majority. Some modifications were made to address the specific context.

This model is in two parts. Part One reflects thematic areas, drawn from the literature, for data collection and reflects the theoretical underpinnings of the project – social inclusion, rehabilitation and Indigenous cultural perspectives. Part One is also about mapping key areas in the lives of Aboriginal women with dependent children exiting prison and allows for the women's and workers' views to shape its content. Part Two maps these themes as well as data gathered from agencies in a multi-level frame to create a holistic approach of analysis to the project in the longer term.

This model – and both its parts – has been developed to be flexible². It allows data to be mapped as both risk and protective factors. This is why the arrows are two-way. By examining risk and protection, this project is alert to risk factors that impact upon Aboriginal women with dependent children leaving prison. In addition, the protective section is vital in highlighting and further developing the strengths these clients already maintain.

It is also important to ensure that the relationships are not just from the women to a thematic area in isolation. The outside dotted circle is to note that

¹ This proposed model has been adapted from the 'Social Education' model, developed by Jackie Ruddock and Meredith Turnbull. The model is copyright Ruddock and Turnbull, 2007. Permission to adapt the model has been granted.

² "To overcome the resistance of those who may feel that the logic model exercise is a distraction from the true work of program implementation, or who are intimidated by its jargon, those providing support and technical assistance need to be flexible enough to allow the community to adapt the tool to meet its needs. In addition, the language and the models themselves must be kept simple enough to convey the program's underlying rationale, not "shrouded" by "overlying all the elements of evaluation" (Renger & Titcomb, 2002, p. 495). Renger and Titcomb suggest, for example, that a program's underlying rationale can be most simply discerned by repeatedly asking the question "why," thereby allowing program planners and evaluators to identify the causal factors that are being targeted.

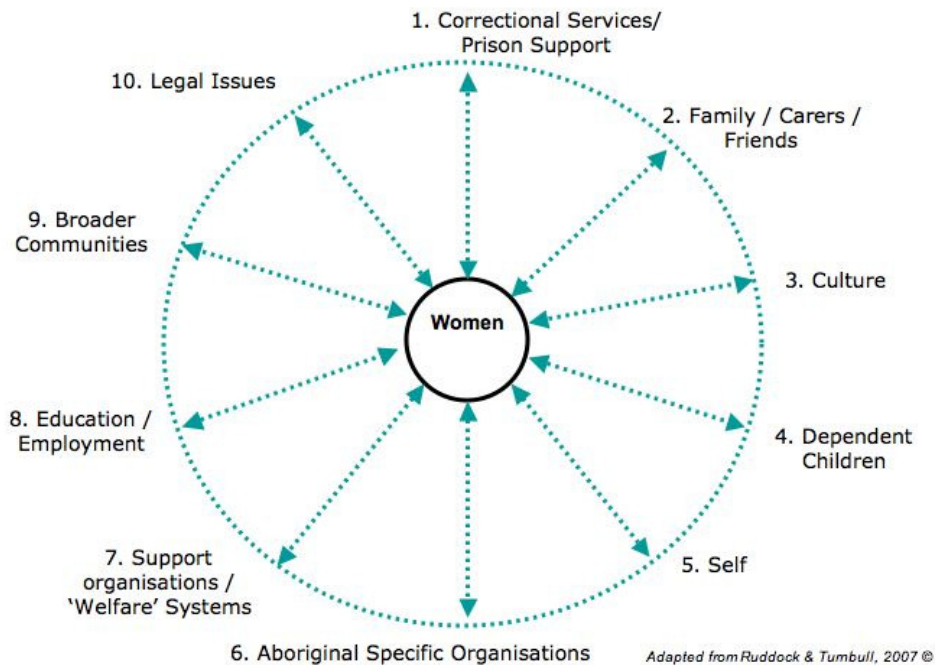
the relationships between thematic areas must also be examined (for example, between 'legal issues' and 'correctional services / prison support'). In other words both inter and intra connections are to be recognised in keeping with a holistic or wrap around approach.

The circle is dotted, as are the relationship arms / spokes within the model. This is deliberate, and alerts key stakeholders to how strong / weak the links may be between Aboriginal women and aspects of their lives, as well as between organisations / sections of their communities.

There are ten sections within the model. Below are a brief introduction and an example. The importance is that, in line with the Literature Review, this model allows for ongoing and intensive support, connections for women and 'throughcare'.

This model works on the assumption of stable housing which is the fundamental building block of the pilot project ie Aboriginal women with dependent children leaving prison will be provided with stable housing for a reasonable length of time.

Model for Aboriginal women with dependent children exiting prison - PART ONE



Data relevant to each segment of this model is gathered together and is categorised as protective / risk factors. For example the self-segment may contain the following:

Self	Looking at individual, family and community issues for each woman.	Protective / Risk factors may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health • AOD issues • Relevant family history • Community engagement
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A more detailed exemplar of this categorising is in Appendix 6.

The benefit of this model is that it can be applied in a multi-level approach (see below). These are the levels of analysis for this project. For example in Level One, the information can be analysed in terms of: type of service, reach of service, model of service, capacity to work with target group, availability and material assistance. This multi-level approach is designed to outline sustained support for and *with* Aboriginal women.

Model for Aboriginal women with dependent children exiting prison - PART TWO

Project Logic, Tool for Results Accountability

Level One (white)

- Notional mapping of agencies according to surveys
- Sort into type of organisation, and then add detail

Level Two (grey)

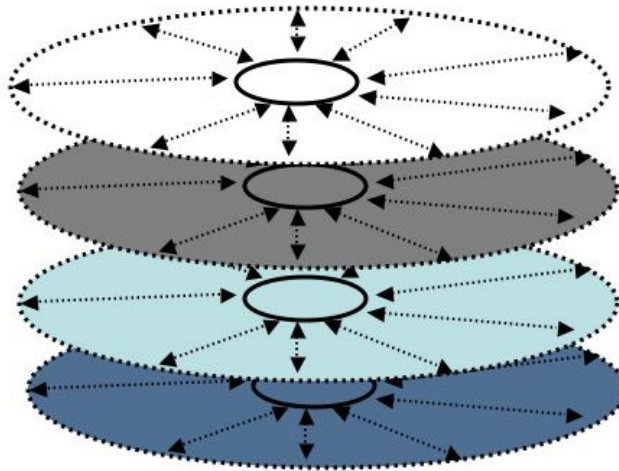
- Mapping the quotes/data from the women
- Mapping the quotes/data from correctional staff

Level Three (blue)

- Potential case management tool for ongoing work with clients

Level Four (dark blue)

- Evaluation tool for the project



Adapted from Ruddock & Turnbull, 2007 ©

By applying this project logic (including analysis of both risk and protective factors), the data can be mapped in a contextual and relevant way. Further, it is holistic and visually captures the methodology of the research project.

The model also allows for Results Accountability or Action Research cycles for the pilot project (Level 4 of PART TWO).

Results

Service Delivery: Agency analysis and mapping (Level 1)

Agencies in Western Sydney that were assumed to have or had worked with the target group were selected to take part in a survey. Fifty five services received a letter of introduction and questions relating to their work with these women and their children. The survey also requested general information such as location and geographical range. Based on the documentary evidence and response rate, the Project officer also contacted organisations directly to participate in a short, structured telephone or in-person interview.

In total the project received and collated 27 completed surveys.

As the research is being conducted to create a pilot for Western Sydney, the data collected was analysed in two ways.

The services were mapped broadly so that key service provisions and gaps could be seen then specific agencies were selected due to their capacity and suitability for the development of the project. It is important to note that the data collected was self-reported and true at the time of collection. Any pilot project would require a brief reassessment of service capacity prior to becoming involved. Further, a formal agreement between agencies will be vital to ensure the coordinated support needs of these women are addressed.

The detailed analysis of the services is found at Appendix 7

The results do not represent an exhaustive list of services in Western Sydney. Some agencies did not engage with the project even after a number of attempts and these are noted.

Agencies were broken into five categories based upon the information they provided.

1. High-level support
2. Medium-level support
3. Occasional support
4. Other
5. For Children and young people

At this stage, a service is allocated into one category only (i.e. best fit)

High-Level Support

Agencies in this category include:

- Murri Mittigar (Aboriginal specific post-release service)
- Jessie Street Domestic Violence Services (women specific accommodation and support)
- Penrith Women's Refuge (women and children specific accommodation and support)
- Cawarra Women's Refuge (Aboriginal specific service)
- Aboriginal Medical Service, Western Sydney (Aboriginal specific service)
- Wentworth Area Community Housing (directly linked to the refuges above)
- NSW Department of Health, Justice Health – Aboriginal Health Unit

These agencies:

- Directly support Aboriginal women exiting prison (client group)
- May directly support Aboriginal women within prison
- Employ Aboriginal staff
- Have a case management structure
- Run programs within prisons
- Have some capacity to expand
- Run programs for Aboriginal women – educational, etc
- May have supported accommodation or direct links with such services
- May provide appropriate support for children's
- Have active links in with other relevant organisations
- Provide intensive support, long term

These are agencies that would be potential partners with the trial project.

Mid-Level Support

Agencies in this category include:

- Aboriginal Prison and Family Unit, St Marys
- WSAHS – Aboriginal Health Service Delivery & Program
- Hawkesbury Nepean Community Legal Centre Inc. Aboriginal Legal Access Service.
- Community Restorative Centre (CRC)

Note: TAFE Mt Druitt came into the project very late and has not yet been able to send information, so is not included in the table of agencies. It is though very keen to provide education opportunities for the women.

Agencies in this category:

- Employ some Aboriginal staff
- Directly support Aboriginal women
- Provide mid-level support (intensive to medium term)
- Have good / effective community standing
- Demonstrate an ability to work with client group

These agencies may potentially assist with specific aspects of the trial.

Occasional Support

Agencies in this category include:

- SWAHS – Blacktown City Mental Health (specifically for clients with mental health issues)
- South Court Primary Care Centre, Nepean Hospital (Needle and Syringe Exchange)
- Aboriginal Catholic Ministry
- Wise Employment
- Link Up NSW
- Guthrie House
- Centrelink (Penrith) – Prison Services Unit

- Mt Druitt Family Violence Team

This category includes organisations that:

- Provide specialist support in one primary area
- Employ Aboriginal staff, have occasional Aboriginal support or links to Aboriginal communities
- Have group work service delivery
- Do not provide intensive support in the area

These agencies may potentially provide intermittent support for the trial.

Other organizations

- Blue Mountains Women's Health Centre
- Elizabeth Evatt Community Legal Centre
- Penrith-Mt Druitt Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Scheme
- Penrith District Office, Probation & Parole, Community Offender Services, Department of Corrective Services.
- Mirang Din Aboriginal Women's Resource Centre Inc
- Hawkesbury District Health – Counselling & Population Health

These agencies:

- Have limited or no Aboriginal staff
- Have Aboriginal staff but are not in the geographical region or do not provide a service
- Have little ability to work intensively
- Or require an appointment prior to accessing service
- Or have an inconsistent history of working with Aboriginal communities
- Or are not really 'in-person' based rather are telephone referral, outreach, etc.

These agencies are unlikely to be involved directly in the trial.

For children and young people

Agencies in this category include:

- Penrith City Council – Children Services
- Mimali

These agencies:

- Have Aboriginal specific service for children and young people
- Are in the geographical region
- Take an holistic approach to working with families

These agencies will potentially provide support and services for the child-related issues in the trial.

For detailed and specific information, please see Appendix 8.

Below is a list of agencies that were approached and followed up sometimes numerous times, but did not provide information.

Agencies that had not provided information at the time of finalising this report but which are considered important to engage in the pilot project:

Probation & Parole, Katoomba, Koori liaison

Aboriginal Cultural & Resource Centre, Katoomba

The Women's Cottage, Richmond

Salvation Army, Indigenous programs, Penrith

Department of Housing, Penrith

Agencies that responded but indicated they did not think they were in a position to participate but the pilot project will need to work with these agencies to ensure they do participate:

NSW Police, Mt Druitt and Penrith. Both agencies indicated they were interested in the program and wanted to be kept informed.

Agencies that said they would participate but have not yet provided any information:

Penrith Court House

Nepean Hospital, Mental Health

Woman's Health, Mt Druitt

Department of Housing, Mt Druitt

Department of Education Indigenous program

Western Sydney Aboriginal Foundation Corp.

Murrin Weejali (Aboriginal drug & alcohol service)

Barnardos

Salvation Army, New Careers for Aboriginal People

South Penrith Neighbourhood Centre, ATSI program (in collaboration with DoH)

Women's needs
(Level 2)

Women's views

In total 17 women were interviewed for this project. The interviews conducted with Aboriginal women in prison focussed on what their experiences had been pre and post prison. For example, women were asked about their thoughts and experiences of accessing services within and post-prison. They were also asked to talk about what issues they face during and post prison. Finally they were asked about their dependent children. Please see Appendix 4 for the interview guide.

On the whole, there is much consistency amongst the women's comments. They report many similar feelings. The feelings they speak of both inside and after prison, include isolation (when disconnected from families), frustration (at themselves; at some organisations that they believe aren't consulting with them), concern (for their children), and feeling helpless but hopeful (i.e. by being able to articulate their challenges ahead, like not wanting to re-offend but knowing the barriers they continually face).

An analysis of the interviews highlighted six themes.

Dependent Children

The overwhelming theme in the interviews was the importance of their children in these women's lives:

I look at me babies and I want them to be safe

And I've just had a rough ride other than that. But I put my kids first before myself. I make sure their clothes fit and everything

This second quote highlights the difficulty the women said they had in raising their children when their own lives are 'rough'. The women also spoke in some length of how they aim to overcome their own barriers, so as to prioritise the needs of their children as best they can. A few women were concerned that their children might follow their own path, and aimed to come together as a family to try to prevent that. They talked about providing love to and wanted so much to provide opportunities for their children. They emphasised over and over again the importance to them and their children of maintaining the relationship between mother and child. This was only achieved by ongoing contact with their dependent children. This contact – in person ideally – with children is crucial:

I think that having contact with children is a big thing you know. It settles you down.

As one woman commented,

Being a Mum is really the hardest job but it's the most enjoyable job as well.

The interviews also highlight the serious issue of custody of and access to children.

I'll be living with my oldest son, and my baby daughter is with my cousin, and she's only two streets away, and they said I can only see her once a month until it goes back to court. And that's really hard, that's an issue, I mean I don't see why I shouldn't be able to see her whenever I want, you know what I mean?

The women pointed out that it is sometimes the case that children of Aboriginal women are being made wards of the state without direct consultation with, or knowledge of their mothers.

It was clear that there were many legal matters related to their children that the women needed help with.

They report feelings of deep 'loss' of their children and 'missing out' on their children's lives. They report feeling like their children are growing up and they are having little to no part in the process. One woman's distressed comment is representative:

But there's just so much I've missed...

They acknowledged that their children needed safety, security and love but that they needed help in providing that.

Housing

One of my main priorities is to get a roof over my head.

The women interviewed discussed their universally common experience of unstable housing situations. These range from always living in other people's places to living with partners in volatile, violent relationships to living with extended family members with little security or stability. Upon release they reported having in past or currently looking forward to some short-term accommodation (like refuges), returning to the last housing they were in before custody, often be with an abusive partner and most likely returning to locations with, in their words, the 'wrong crowd'.

Some women interviewed reported being on waiting lists for priority public housing. Often they have applications in areas that are no longer where they think it best to live, even in other states:

I got one in Melbourne, I've got one for community housing, Aboriginal housing everything. My priority housing has been in here (in NSW) since 2002.

Even if the housing were to become available, accessing it may prove difficult if they are allocated a house in an area that is no longer appropriate. They said they are often given parole conditions that preclude associations with certain people, the very people their housing is with. The women articulated this concern seeing it as a helpless cycle. They report knowing that 'going back will be difficult', but they see little option. The crucial factor for them is that without a house they won't have access to or regain custody of their children so they see themselves in impossible situations.

This represents another area of legal advice and aid for which the women expressed a need but which they didn't appear to be getting.

As is identified in the literature review and in the rationale for the development of a pilot project:

There's a lot of issues that I really need to deal with, the first issue is housing.

The women fully recognised and articulated the need for supportive services with their housing, services such as financial skills training and life skills. They commented that these would greatly assist them in holding onto stable housing.

Families, friends and associates

Families, friends and associates can be both a strength and risk factor for Aboriginal women exiting prison. Some of these relationships pose ongoing risk factors:

The only reason that I'm in here is because of other people being around me, coming to my house, wanting me to go here, go there, dropping everything... when I'd go with them, we'd be gone for hours you know... And it's just people like that around me that puts me down.

The women explained that it can be very hard to say 'no' to people they have had previous associations with when they are released. They expressed their wish to stay 'clean', but acknowledged that when back in their old environments, this aim is almost impossible to maintain.

On the other hand, they pointed out that many family members and friends support them, especially their children. Two examples below demonstrate that some women in prison have the support of their Grandmothers. They acknowledged the strain this can pose on people as they get older themselves:

My Mum passed away... so it's just me and my Grandma now. And she's got the kids [6 kids] and she's 79. So it's hard for her.

Yeah my Grandma is looking after the kids and she's 84.

The importance and prioritisation of family bonds in Aboriginal families is well-known. These can be risk and a strength factors for these women. Some women reported little to no association with their families and face a risk of being 'isolated' emotionally and geographically. Other women explain how their extended families are helping to support them and how much this helps them to maintain some feelings of control, even when in prison, or distanced from their children.

Alcohol and other drug issues

As is reflected in the Literature Review, in the interviews with workers, and with the women themselves, alcohol and other drug issues pose a significant barrier to Aboriginal women who are exiting prison, developing the lives they

want to live. This is exacerbated when the use, relapse or lapse into using has a direct impact on other parts of their lives such as custody of children, stable housing and employment / education opportunities.

After the death of my two babies, I just suppressed my emotions, my depression and my sadness and went to alcohol and smoking marijuana. They were my scapegoat. Everything... it's a horrible burden.

This is another aspect of their lives where women report the need for continuity and ongoing support. They recognise that the best time for them to change is when they feel 'ready' and try to access support (this may often take place when inside prison). Women said they wanted to have Drug and Alcohol counselling. However, they also stated that if they request such help and it doesn't happen (in a timely manner), that they'll return to known behaviour quickly. Some women reported 'needing assistance and support straight away as soon as they are released, otherwise they lose hope and get back into the boot' (interview notes from a prison where audio-recording was not allowed).

As one participant said:

I do it to take my pain away. But it doesn't work. I know that.

She recognised that this knowledge does not necessarily mean that she will stop using, or not feel impelled to begin using again in the future, especially if she finds herself in future 'painful' situations.

Culture

Providing an opportunity for Aboriginal women to come together and talk about their lives cannot be underestimated. The benefit of cultural spaces – especially that of healing and indigenous strength – has long been noted in academic work and evidence-based practice. The women raised this and

outlined some of the small, but significant interventions that would prove beneficial:

And even if we just go... and talk about cultural issues it would all be good.

Separation from families and loss of culture, kinship and heritage also has an ongoing impact on Aboriginal women:

I was never raised in an Aboriginal family, I was adopted at 2 weeks old although my family, Aboriginal family, lived in the same community. I've still issues there, you know.

Linked to this, women reported needing to 'trust', but having difficulty in doing so. This includes trusting the people they are speaking to (professional workers), trust in understanding the processes around them, and trusting themselves. One woman explained that, to begin to look at her issues and work through them, she needs to work with a woman she can trust.

Trauma

The impact of sexual abuse, both childhood and ongoing, and domestic violence was raised. The women's stories indicated their behaviour is often about both pain *and* anger.

One woman stated in some frustration when talking about not having access to children and losing housing:

I think I'm tired of being an Aboriginal woman.

It is important to understand the context of such a statement. These women were faced with ongoing and complicated problems, with their Aboriginality sometimes experienced as further adding to their concerns. It is not surprising that the women spoke about feeling 'hopeless' and frustrated at times.

The women highlighted the importance of getting a range of supports to help deal with their 'pain' (as well as other matters) as soon as possible after entering prison, so they can develop plans for when they are released. They were clear that culturally appropriate support is essential.

Summary

The interviews with the 17 Aboriginal women in prison revealed the competing and complex matters they were facing prior to, within and after prison and the needs they expressed related to these circumstances. Protective factors, such as supportive family, strong feeling for culture and their children were often outweighed in their own minds and experience by family and friends who were bad influences; by unresolved trauma such as sexual abuse, domestic violence and untimely death of children and parents; and the lack of suitable housing and support. Virtually no services were singled out as being known and helpful although some women asked about services they had heard of like Guthrie House but had never been able to use. These women had not benefited much from services in the past but were clear that they wanted and needed support, but it had to be with people they trusted. Their children were paramount in their thinking. But many needed both legal and human services support to get to a position where they would be able to even see their children never mind regain custody or live with them again.

In short they said they needed to start good post-release support whilst still in prison by building contact with their children (if that was not currently happening), getting legal assistance regarding their children and other post-release matters such as parole restrictions, by working on a plan to set things up well for when they were released including establishing where it was they were going to live and by building trust with the person / agency helping them. They said when released this support needed to continue. They wanted to be able to go to Aboriginal or at least culturally friendly drug and alcohol rehabilitation, to have support in resisting old habits and bad influences, to have places to enjoy culture and to have support in keeping housing. Most of all they wanted to be with and to be able to provide a good and safe life for

their children. For a good number this meant having housing without their children initially and working towards that goal.

Workers' views

Organisational staff members who work directly with Aboriginal women with dependent children exiting prison reported their perception of women's needs. These were categorised into risk and protective factors.

Key issues reported were:

- Time: time for preparation, long-term support
- Structure: assisting women to not feel 'out of control' or 'chaotic', or like they have no options. This includes support and structure in the general areas of skills, emotions and relationships
- Safety of children; some women would need significant help creating a safe environment for their children
- Ability to have "stepping stones" – experience in achieving small goals that build confidence and self-esteem
- Intensive support and co-ordinated support
- Aboriginal women appropriate services, especially drug and alcohol services and those addressing violent and abusive relationships.

As one worker put it, '12 months is not going cut it' – this is long-term work.

Although expressed differently, on the whole the workers' views tally with the women's expressed needs. At the top of their lists were

- the need for appropriate planning and support to start as soon as possible after women enter prison with that support connected to the post release reality and
- far better coordination and integration of services including ongoing supported housing (not just crisis housing), helping women move out of violent and destructive relationships and drug and alcohol counselling.

Workers, like the women, recognised the almost impossible situation many women are placed in having to return to abusive relationships and to the same circumstances from which they had come. There was little in their experience that helped to overcome that with women having often to wait for appropriate housing and in the meantime having no real option other than to return their old associations to see or regain their children and to overcome isolation. The need for an ordered, structured life was an important factor in most workers' experience and this accords with the women's wishes to have an ordered life to better look after their children. The workers agreed that there was a lack of appropriate services post-release nevertheless they recognised that if the few appropriate services that were available such as Aboriginal legal services, AOD and Aboriginal medical services, were better integrated and connected with a supported housing initiative, that would be a strong move in the right direction. They agreed with the women that such housing would need to have a number of options because, in their experience many women do not exit prison having immediate care and custody of their children. Like the women they recognised a staged housing approach might be appropriate; for example women who do not have their children living with them but are working to accomplish that, may share a house and seek different supports to those who have their children with them.

There was an apparent gap between what the Aboriginal women workers knew and what non-Indigenous workers knew, so better sharing of information would be helpful.

There was though agreement that Aboriginal children's services were seriously lacking and for this particular group of children with such specific needs, services would need to be built perhaps together with family counselling and support.

The detailed risk and protective factors analysis of the workers' interviews is in Appendix 8

The Needs of Dependent Children

Although there was no remit in this needs analysis to interview children, their needs have been somewhat covered from the perspective of the women and workers. Nevertheless a proper analysis of these dependent children's needs is necessary and is recommended.

What can be said is, as the Literature Review and data from this project indicate, dependent children of women in prison have their own set of needs that are important to address for their own ongoing health and wellbeing. Measures and goals like 'in the best interests of the child' are complex and difficult to assess in the long term. In addition, anecdotally it is often the case that there are competing interests in assessing the needs of dependent children of Aboriginal women exiting prison. Examples of these may include: the benefit of ongoing parental bonds, with appropriate ongoing support (family counseling); parenting by others whilst the mother is in prison and conflict about returning the child(ren) to their mother; the importance of ongoing cultural identity formation in young Aboriginal people with their families; legal requirements to remove children from their parents; the age of the child / young person; the ability of the child / young person (in the case of mental and/or physical health issues); these children often living with unresolved trauma and resultant behavioural and emotional difficulties; difficulties due to unstable housing; geographical dislocations; the lack of culturally appropriate models of development and support for Aboriginal children in these circumstances. To date there is no research available on the specific ongoing complex needs of dependent Aboriginal children whose mothers are exiting prison.

Briefly, organisations like the NSW Department of Community Services and other relevant services, often must weigh up the needs of the child (or young person) and the needs of parents in complex cases, without clear guidelines. In addition, reports such as the Case Management Resource Kit for SAAP Services highlight that people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds are often over represented in SAAP services (p. 2.11), so the

needs of these Aboriginal children and young people are of major concern.

Although only briefly discussed, the needs of dependent children whose parent(s) is in, or post-prison are significant and should be included in any support model. However, as noted, a detailed analysis of the needs of dependent children is outside the scope of this research project.

Service Capacity compared to Aboriginal women with dependent children's needs leaving prison

This capacity comparison is based upon the responses received from services and agencies and analysed in the section 'Service Delivery'. This project was unable to assess the capacity of services that did not respond. Hence there may be some services that could provide services to these women and their children but are not included. It uses the women centred model modified by the women and workers' needs assessments as a basis for the service needs.

In summary:

Prison related support such as health and AOD services, is met largely by Corrective Services' in-house provision and by Community Corrections. There are though some serious service gaps.

The main needs not being met in some prisons appear to be access to children in prison; timely appropriate preparation for release; and connections with appropriate community agencies (although given the lack of community agencies this is a hard ask for Corrections staff). Bolwara and to some patchy extent Dilwynia do attempt to meet these needs but most Aboriginal women appear to miss out.

Family and Friends

Bolwara provides counselling and support. Elsewhere in the prison system and in particular post-release, family support and counselling for Aboriginal

women appear to be very limited. Services are either not specific or are out of area. Again a lead agency case management model would serve the women and children well, but capacity in this area would need to be built.

Culture and self

Aboriginal and women specific general support and linking is available from Muru Mittigar with perhaps some help available from Aboriginal Prison and Family Unit and from Community Restorative Centre although both these services appear stretched to their limit in regard to Aboriginal women, so although they indicate support they would need increased capacity. Aboriginal Catholic Ministry may be able to provide some support in the longer term.

Although as noted, there are a number of agencies that can assist, the current need for an agency that: uses case management to be dedicated to working with and supporting this group of women and their children; develops MOUs or similar with relevant agencies; and identifies needs as they become apparent, is not being met.

Dependent children's needs

Children's services: Link up supports Aboriginal persons including prisoners linking with their children. But as far as Aboriginal child specific or even experienced services, little was forthcoming from the survey. Penrith City Council has a Koori worker attached who is keen to help but it is not clear, in resource terms, how much this worker would be able to provide for this group of children. Aboriginal workers associated with this needs analysis believe an Aboriginal child care centre like Murawina (in Redfern) is necessary. Mimali is a family and child agency but limited to Mt Druitt postcode families. Given that the children of the women exiting prison will cover a wide range of ages, development and need, what is clearly missing is an Aboriginal children's service with experienced child development workers, with which the housing project can link.

Support and Welfare and self

Individually case managed supported accommodation / housing is

available from Penrith Women's Refuge, Jessie Street Domestic Violence Service (although neither of these is Aboriginal women specific) and Cawarra all with support from Wentworth Area Community Housing. The SAAP case management model used by these agencies is particularly appropriate but may need to be modified to some extent given the multiple and extreme needs of many of the women who would use this service – see comments in the following sections: 'Service Model' and 'Evaluation'. All these agencies are keen to be involved.

Aboriginal Health services are available from Justice Health Aboriginal Health Unit (although it is overstretched and only provides services for those in prison or parole) and from Aboriginal Medical Service Western Sydney. Some health services may be available from WSAHS's Winnan Gidyal but its capacity for this group would need to be built. All these agencies are keen to be involved.

There is though currently no agreement regarding these women and health services post-release. An MOU or similar needs to be established between the trial project lead agency and the WSAHS Aboriginal Medical Service to ensure appropriate resourcing for these women and children.

Mental Health services. Nepean Hospital has a Koori mental Health worker so this agency may be able to provide appropriate services for the women but there is no evidence of current linking or MOU or similar. Otherwise mental health services appear in short supply with the only other agency responding being SWAHS Blacktown City Mental Health. This service appears to be largely acute admissions with attached community services. Both the Aboriginal Medical Service and Winnan Gidyal mention mental health assessments or support but it is not clear that they have capacity to service the mental health needs of Aboriginal women exiting prison.

Alcohol and other Drugs services also appear to be in short supply with the already mentioned Aboriginal Medical Service and Winnan Gidyal mentioning AOD counselling or methadone services but again not women specific and not necessarily at the level required. A women specific AOD service in the area is needed urgently.

Education

A range of educational services, from basic to vocational, is needed by the women post-release. Although TAFE provides courses in prisons, there was not strong evidence from the women that they were able to or perhaps even wanted to avail themselves of these. There does not appear to be a continuum of or linked (prison to community) TAFE courses so working with TAFE towards this will be necessary. TAFE has made Aboriginal women and prisoners priority groups and is very keen to build a service relationship with the pilot project so this need is likely to be able to be met.

Employment

WISE employment appears to be the only employment agency in the area with any capacity for these women – it currently visits Dilwynia. It has recently employed a Koori worker, but so far there is little evidence it has capacity to assist Aboriginal women with multiple needs.

Legal services in prison are available through Legal Aid but it is not clear this particular group of women is able to take advantage of the service or even is well informed about Legal Aid. The women noted a number of needs around children and housing that were not being addressed. Post-release legal services are available to some extent from Hawkesbury Nepean Community Legal Centre but this service would need to expand to meet the needs of these women. It is keen to be involved.

Summary

This comparison of what is available and what the women need indicates that there is an excellent base in Western Sydney upon which to build case managed supported accommodation and that a number of Aboriginal specific

services such as health, education, legal and personal support are keen and have capacity to link with such a program. On the other hand there are apparent deficits such as in Aboriginal and women specific employment, AOD and mental health services. The apparent lack of Aboriginal or at least appropriate children's services is of serious concern.

What is also lacking is an up-to-date local resource manual for those working with Aboriginal women. This would help facilitate the case management approach being recommended for this project.

Future Planning and Opportunities

The Service model

(Level 3)

When all of the above are considered in the light of the recommendations in the literature review and the model outlined on pp19/20 the following suggests itself as the best service model for the supported housing pilot service for these women and their children.

This report suggests the most effective model is a lead agency – being the housing manager *and* case management service for the client group – working in collaboration with approximately 4-5 other key agencies. By creating a wrap-around supporting service, including a clear lead agency to maintain continuity of service, the pilot comes close to providing a ‘one stop shop’ highlighted as important by the Aboriginal women themselves.

In addition, it is very likely that the lead agency will also have relationships with other relevant agencies that may provide less intensive, or, a specialist service to Aboriginal women exiting prison, i.e. services that may be individual to the client’s direct needs. Following is an outline of the service model, including some suggested key roles and responsibilities for participating services:

Lead Agency:

Roles and responsibilities of the lead agency include:

- Managing the housing of the clients
- Directly leading the case management of the clients
- Implementing partnership documents – such as Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) or Terms of reference / Partnerships with other key agencies to maintain a continuity of care for the women
- Forming a committee of all participating key agencies, and convening regular meetings to discuss and plan for the ongoing support of the clients

- Developing and consulting on an agreed Communication Policy / Strategy to share information regarding clients in a transparent manner
- Developing and maintaining the ongoing evaluation for the support of the project
- Developing and maintaining the ongoing evaluation for the support of the clients
- Developing key roles and responsibilities with KPIs / goals for supporting agencies

Experience / skills of the agency:

- Demonstrated experience working with Aboriginal women
- Demonstrated experience working with women exiting prison
- Demonstrated experience in working collaboratively with a range of organisations – including government and non-government organisations
- Demonstrated experience in coordinating organisations in the service delivery of clients

Supporting Agencies:

Roles and responsibilities of supporting agencies include:

- Complying with an agreed Communication Policy / Strategy to share information regarding clients in a transparent manner
- Participation in meetings, including planning for ongoing case management of clients
- Participation in evaluation meetings
- Providing data to the lead agency on the client (as agreed between agencies, for the benefit of the client)

Experience / skills of the agency:

- Demonstrated experience working with Aboriginal women, or a willingness to undertake cultural training, as appropriate
- Demonstrated ability to work in partnership
- Demonstrated and ongoing commitment to wrap-around service delivery

- Demonstrated experience in working collaboratively with a range of organisations – including government and non-government organisations

The authors of this report note that before the pilot begins, agencies should come together and use their experience and expertise to set up a system and process of service delivery with these clients that will create the most effective continuity of support. The above information has been developed through the consultation with the Steering Committee and Project Reference Group of the needs assessment stage. This section, and the evaluation section, will be important to review and reflect upon when the pilot begins.

The NGO and government agencies that emerged as the best lead and with which to form partnerships to ensure the project succeeds are listed below. These agencies are named from those organisations that responded in detail to the needs assessment survey.

The lead agency may include an organisation such as:

- Jessie Street Domestic Violence Services (women specific accommodation and support)
- Penrith Women's Refuge (women and children specific accommodation and support)
- Wentworth Area Community Housing (directly linked to the refuges above)

It is conceivable that some joint arrangement may prove appropriate in forming the lead agency.

Supporting agencies may include organisations such as:

- Murri Mittigar (Aboriginal specific post-release service)
- Aboriginal Medical Service, Western Sydney
- Hawkesbury Nepean Community Legal Centre Inc. Aboriginal Legal Access Service.
- WSAHS – Aboriginal Health Service Delivery & Program

- TAFE

With assistance from agencies such as

- Link Up NSW
- Community Restorative Centre (CRC)
- Wise Employment
- Centrelink (Penrith) – Prison Services Unit
- NSW Department of Health, Justice Health – Aboriginal Health Unit
- Aboriginal Prison and Family Unit, St Marys

Other important and specialist agencies may include:

- South Court Primary Care Centre, Nepean Hospital (Needle and Syringe Exchange)
- Aboriginal Catholic Ministry
- Mt Druitt Family Violence Team
- Cawarra Women's Refuge (Aboriginal specific service)
- SWAHS – Blacktown City Mental Health (specifically for clients with mental health issues)

Key to the success of the project will be the partnership formed amongst government and NGO agencies. It is suggested that a NSW Human Services Accord agreement be developed to ensure a commitment from each government department for this 'Aboriginal women with dependent children leaving prison' trial project.

It is suggested that at least the following NSW government departments enter such an Accord:

Housing NSW
 Aboriginal Housing Office
 Attorney General's Department
 Department of Corrective Services
 Department of Disability and Home Care
 Department of Community Services
 NSW Health
 Department of Education and Training

It is noted that the Department of Corrective Services, Community Offender Services (COS), is currently developing a range of transitional services to assist both those leaving prison and those on community orders who are having difficulty with housing and other aspects of transition to the community. It is suggested that there be close consultation between the trial project and COS as the project comes to fruition.

Potential Barriers to providing a 'wrap-around' Aboriginal women with dependent children leaving prison support service

Lack of key services

The gaps in services have been noted with indications as to which services could increase capacity or reach, so it is vital for government and non-government agencies in Western Sydney to build up the necessary supports in the near future.

Agencies not having the resources or commitment to continue to be involved

From the beginning there must be commitment for the period of the trial by the lead and all partner agencies supported by relevant government departments. The partnership driving the needs analysis is in the best position to ensure this happens.

Timing

It is imperative to start the pilot only when all appropriate agencies are agreed and the service is organised with responsibilities clearly understood. The expectations of this already multiply marginalised group should not be raised falsely.

Many logic model proponents believe that the process of developing a logic model forces participants to articulate and clarify the project's goals and assign responsibility for tasks and outcomes, thereby helping to foster

collaboration and build consensus. In our experience, these benefits tend to accrue to coalitions that are already fairly strong and collaborative.

Women for a range of reasons will exit housing

It must be recognised that not all the women who start in the housing project will continue. There may be many reasons for this including becoming more independent, finding suitable housing elsewhere and deciding this approach is not suitable for them as well as re-offending or breaching parole. So the first group of women to be housed need to be selected so as to give the pilot the best chance to succeed and develop. The service will need time to build its unique strengths.

Attracting and keeping skilled staff

As such a service is a new venture the lead agency and its partners will need to ensure the best staff are employed and that professional development training is available to meet skill requirements. The agencies suggested as taking lead and partnership roles appear to provide such staff development already but the specific needs of these women and children may require more than the usual training.

Communication

Communication can easily break down between partners and workers. It is essential to keep talking, track progress and reflect on mistakes.

Many of the community coalitions that developed logic models identified an unexpected side benefit: by having a logic model that succinctly laid out program activities and expected results, the coalition was able to communicate more effectively with both internal and external constituencies (McLaughlin & Jordan, 1999).

Evaluation Reporting

(Level 4)

The data collected in this project was analysed using project logic (see diagram on Page 14). The model was adapted for the specifics of this project. It was presented to the project Community Reference Group and Steering Committee where it was approved in the majority. Some modifications were made to address the specific context. It was agreed that the benefit of the application of the project logic model is that it can be utilised not only for mapping existing data, but also be used to map data in the evaluation of the project. This evaluation can take place in at least two ways:

Evaluation 1

Wrap-around model for the Pilot Housing Organisation (Level 4, Dark Blue)

With the proposed undertaking of the AWEF Pilot Project, the housing provider organisation can prepare to support the clients (Aboriginal women with dependent children leaving prison), by mapping actual services in each of the 10 key areas using the mapping in this report as a base. Further, at regular intervals, the organisation can evaluate and report on the relative strength and effectiveness of the relationship with the organisations on their map.

For example,

- With housed client(s), the client(s) may access the Link Up organisation (6. 'Aboriginal Specific Organisations') in the first three months of release, to seek legal and culturally appropriate support in gaining custody of her dependent child.
- Because the housing organisation will have Link Up already on their map (due to the data from this needs assessment, as well as their own mapping when they become the formal housing provider for the project), they may have a written agreement (Memorandum of

Understanding, or similar) that allows for the sharing of information of the client(s) between the two services (a recommendation of this report). This aims to increase communication, and delay time lags, thereby supporting the client(s) more holistically.

- After working collaboratively over a number of months, Link Up and the housing provider – which is where the primary case worker is located – assist the client(s) with access to her dependent child.
- Link Up and the housing provider negotiate the best housing option for the client(s) and child as the application process is underway, so when the child is in the custody of their mother again, she moves to a new house within the supported accommodation service where her child can live with her.
- In evaluating the relationship after six months or one year, the housing provider can report a strong and effective working relationship with an Aboriginal Specific Organisation.
- Both organisations can provide both qualitative and quantitative data.
- For example, quantitatively, the housing provider can report that currently they are working with three (3) Aboriginal Specific Organisations, one of which is Link Up. Further, in the last year of reporting, the housing provider and Link Up have worked together with five (5) clients. The housing provider assesses the relationship as being 'excellent' (e.g. 5 out of 5).
- In addition, the map can be used to set targets and evaluate these targets. For example, KPIs or goals (developed by the housing support organisation) can be aimed for and then reported that x amount of relationships need to be established in the next 6 months in x key areas.
- Qualitatively, the housing provider can report the working relationship it has with Link Up. It may include quotes from the client(s), or 'success stories', Interagency presentations, etc.

By undertaking such an evaluation, the organisation is conducting a thorough evaluation and assessment. Such evaluations monitor not only working

relationships, but encourage organisations to reflect on ways to improve their work (Action Research methodologies). The model – with 10 key areas – also visually shows that effective (strong) working relationships are needed in all areas to best support clients, thereby encouraging the organisation to build on its strengths and also look to areas that need improvement. By utilising dotted lines, the organisation can continually map:

- ‘Where are we now?’ / How strong and effective is the relationship?
- ‘Where are we heading to?’ / What do we need to do to make the working relationship with x organisation more robust?
- In which area(s) do we have the strongest relationships?
- Which area(s) will we focus on improving in the next x months?

By working in tandem with the *SAAP V Program Logic Tool*, the organisation is moving from outputs to outcomes, with the goal of evaluating and improving on organisational and systematic “crisis resolution”.

Evaluation 2

Wrap-around model for ongoing support and case management of client group (Level 3, Light Blue)

As referenced in the Case Management Resource Kit for SAAP Services, case management models need to be culturally appropriate when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients. The model for this needs assessment was adapted for the specifics of this project. It was presented to the project Community Reference Group and Steering Committee where it was approved in the majority. Again, the benefit of the model is in its flexibility.

For example,

- The model can be introduced and used by a case worker when first working with a client(s).
- It can be used verbally (i.e. the worker listening to the client and taking notes on the map during or after the meeting) or,

- The worker and client can work on the map together – allowing the client to map their own thoughts, relationships, experiences and assess the strength / risk of each.
- Over time, the worker and client can build up the map, continually evaluating relationships and connections.

Specifically, and for example,

- A woman talks through her AOD use. She says this when discussing the 5. 'Self' section. The woman is currently not using, as she has just left prison (and was not using inside), but is concerned that when she comes into contact with family / friends she may begin again.
- On the map, the worker asks the client to assess how 'strong' the client feels about this issue.
- Because the client has been on and off using for a number of years, she assesses it as pretty weak [Note, the word 'weak' has nothing to do with the *hope* of the client, or her seeing herself just as 'weak'. It is more about *evaluating* the reality of the situation]. This could be indicated by dotted line with larger gaps between each dot, or it could be measured in other ways.
- The worker can also help the client to see how her 5. 'Self' issue of AOD is linked with the 2. 'Family / Carers / Friends' area of her life.
- By discussing the AOD issue, and how it directly links to other part of her life, the worker and woman are mapping options for her. In other words, they are evaluating risk and strength, i.e. is it better that she steers clear of people who are still using, because that is a risk? Or, if family is important, a strength, then maybe spending more time with her Aunt is better than her cousin who is having their own AOD issues.

Again, on this more individualised level, by working in tandem with the *SAAP V Program Logic Tool*, the worker and woman are moving from outputs to outcomes, with the goal of evaluating and improving "self reliance and independence".

It is recommended – in order to maximise benefit from the evaluation model and tool – that workers delivering the pilot undertake ‘training’ in the model.

This training may occur in the following ways:

- A self-directed learning module
- In-person training for the background and reporting requirements for the pilot, or
- A 'How To Manual' for necessary reporting requirements.

Further, these ‘training’ opportunities are recommended in line with the current experience that within existing systems like SAAP, workers often attend training or undertake self-directed sessions in order to fully understand reporting requirements.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: EoI



**An invitation for Expressions of Interest to
conduct a needs assessment to support the
development of the proposed *Aboriginal
Women With Dependent Children Leaving
Prison* Pilot Project**

December 2006

Introduction

HomelessnessNSW.ACT has received funding from the Department of Community Services (DOCS) to conduct a needs assessment of a proposed project of the Western Sydney Strategic Plan Against Homelessness (WSSPAH).

HomelessnessNSW.ACT is seeking to contract an experienced consultant to undertake a needs assessment to support the development of the proposed Aboriginal Women With Dependent Children, Leaving Prison in the Metro West Region Pilot Project.

The WSSPAH was established as a project of the NSW Government's Partnership Against Homelessness (PAH). The WSSPAH's aim is to facilitate integrated and comprehensive planning and delivery of services for homeless people and people at risk of homelessness in Western Sydney.

In response to the WSSPAH Committee's identification of ex-prisoners and Aboriginal women as priority groups a pilot project will be developed. The aim is to establish an ongoing program to improve the capacity for independent living of Aboriginal women with dependent children, who are exiting Metro West Correctional & Juvenile Justice institutions into the DoCS Metro West Region via a case management/brokerage model.

Prior to the pilot being developed it is necessary that a needs assessment is conducted which will develop an evidence base to support the pilot's development, implementation and management. The evaluation will be overseen by Homelessness NSW.ACT and the Department of Community Services (DOCS) and monitored and guided by the pilot's WSSPAH Committee's Reference Group.

Pilot Proposal

2.1 Pilot Aim

The pilot's broad aim is to support Aboriginal women, with dependent children, who are leaving prison in Western Sydney to reside in the Region and to access housing assistance/support, alcohol and other drug (AOD) services, mental health, and family support through a case management/brokerage model. Access to these services will contribute to minimising the impact of AOD misuse, mental health related issues, family conflict and lack of accommodation, on these marginalised women and children. This will support the women to reduce their potential to re-offend while enhancing their families' health, cultural connectedness and improve community safety.

There are potentially ten uncommitted properties available in the Metro West area for homeless women. It is proposed that up to five of the ten properties be made available to the client group. The women will be supported in the properties by a case manager (1FTE) who will have access to brokerage funds.

It is surmised that women who are in stable accommodation and are supported by a case manager, will improve their ability to access the services they need e.g. AOD, mental health and family support, and reduce their potential to re-offend.

It is anticipated that support will be provided in partnership with a range of other specialist support providers e.g. Health, Housing, Family Support Services, DoCS, Department of Corrective Services (DCS), Centrelink and will focus on providing active and practical assistance to the client.

2.2 Pilot Rationale

Indigenous women are currently the fastest growing prison population in Australia. In New South Wales, Indigenous women represent approximately twenty seven percent of the total female population in custody as of 1 January 2006. This is despite constituting only two percent of the female population of the state. As well, a significant factor among the Indigenous female prisoner population in NSW is the high rate of recidivism. Almost eighty five percent of Aboriginal women in prison have previously been in custody compared with seventy one per cent of non-Aboriginal women.

The NSW Department of Corrective Services have provided some general characteristics of female inmates.

- 24% ATSI (33% of this sub-group self reported that they had been removed from family and made a State Ward)
- 39% reported a self harm history
- 60% had been on psychotropic medication at some point in their lives
- 73% admitted to Psychiatric/Mental Health units as an adult
- Significantly higher levels of illicit drug use, Hep B (64%) C (64%), depression, sexual abuse (60%) than men.

During the most recent National Mental Health Interview, inmates reported the following when asked about their experience in the 12 months prior to interview:

- Psychosis (+ve screen) 11% male and 14% female
- Major depression - 21% male and 46% female
- Bipolar disorder - 0.1% male and 5.4% female

- 33% male and 50% female had contact with mental health services in the last six months

During the same National Mental Health Interview, inmates reported the following when asked about their drug and alcohol use in the 12 months prior to interview:

- Opioids - 33% male and 50% female
- Amphetamines - 31% male and 46% female
- Alcohol - 30% male and 17% female
- Cannabis - 26% male and 21%
- Sedatives - 10% male and 27% female

DCS data and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commissioner's *Social Justice Report 2004* indicate that many Indigenous women released from prison have drug related and/or mental health issues. These issues, as well as the significant levels of family/domestic violence Aboriginal women inmates have experienced and may continue to experience when released, can exacerbate problems of reintegrating back into the community and accessing services. As the majority of Aboriginal women in prison have previously been in custody lack of access post release to AOD services, mental health, housing and other social support can contribute to the likelihood of re-offending.

The NSW Parliament Select Committee report *On the Increase In Prisoner Population Issues Relating to Women* (2000) also found that the demographic information of female inmates overwhelmingly reveals backgrounds of serious economic and social disadvantage, mental health problems, violence and abuse and chronic drug and/or alcohol abuse. Many female inmates were also the primary carers of children prior to their incarceration.

There is a lack of services aimed at supporting women exiting prisons in the Metro West Region. There is an even greater lack of services aimed at supporting the needs of Indigenous women exiting prisons in the Metro West Region. The *Social Justice Report 2004* has noted the general invisibility of Indigenous women to policy makers and program designers in a criminal justice context, with very little attention devoted to their specific needs and circumstances.

The majority of Aboriginal women released from Metro West prisons are released under Probation and Parole (P&P) supervision. At 1 September 2006 thirty nine Aboriginal women will be released from Dillwynia Correctional Centre between 1 September 2006 and 31 August 2007. Thirty one women will be released under supervision and eight will be released after serving a fixed term.

As at 19 September 2006 there were twenty three Aboriginal women on parole in DoCS Metro West Region. The numbers by Probation and Parole Office are as follows.

Probation & Parole Office	ATSI Female Offenders
Mt Druitt	10
Penrith	3

Parramatta	4
Blacktown	6
TOTAL	23

To assist women leaving prison to transition successfully into the community post-release support programs are critical. Generally, the experience of people returning from prison to the wider community 'involves dealing with the negative experiences of imprisonment, in a context all too often characterised by isolation, accommodation difficulties, financial and material constraints and a lack of significant emotional support'. For Indigenous women this is compounded by dislocation from family, community, cultural responsibilities as well as other services she may have been accessing prior to incarceration.

It is proposed that a case management model of service delivery is used to support Aboriginal women, with dependent children, leaving prison in the Metro West Region to reside in the Region. It is expected that women eligible to participate in the project will be those who are subject to parole supervision. When an inmate is released under P&P's supervision the project case manager will have improved P&P support. It is expected that this will streamline access to the parolee's Department of Corrective Services' reports. Access to a parolee's pre-sentence, pre-release and psychological reports will enable the case manager to develop a comprehensive case plan in association with P&P.

A case management service delivery model to support prisoners exiting prison is currently being implemented in Victoria. The project is a joint initiative between the Victorian Department of Correctional Services and the Victorian Department of Human Services. The preliminary findings from an evaluation conducted by Deakin University in 2004, reported in the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Commissioner's *Social Justice Report 2004*, reveals that Indigenous women participated in this initiative at a higher rate than Indigenous men (11.5% and 4.9% respectively). The evaluation suggests that this could be because of the efforts of workers within Corrective Services to house Indigenous women.

The evaluation also indicated the initiative's positive impact on reducing re-offending. Participants on average had four previous prison terms. Nine months post-release, only 15% of those housed under the scheme had re-offended, compared with a 50% re-offence rate of a control group who had not received housing. The evaluation states that the initiative has 'significantly reduced their (ex-offenders) rates of re-offending.

Pilot Background

The Aboriginal women, with dependent children, leaving prison pilot is not yet operational.

Prior to the pilot being further developed information is required which will assist the WSSPAH Committee to make decisions concerning the pilot's implementation, development and management.

The purpose of this evaluation is to:

2. Identify the extent of the need of the client group (Aboriginal women registered with Probation and Parole who have dependent children, leaving prison in the Metro West Region to reside in the Region).
3. Synthesise what is known in current research about service needs for the client group.
4. Review and assess how service provision has occurred for the client group in other locations and with what effect.
5. In consideration of the foregoing, develop recommendations for the WSSPAH Committee to consider in developing, implementing and managing the pilot relative to available pilot resources.

Needs Assessment Summary

Prior to the pilot being implemented it is proposed that a consultant review and evaluate the necessary combination of strategies for key agencies³ to develop, implement and manage a case management/support and brokerage service for Aboriginal women, registered with Probation and Parole who have dependent children, exiting Metro West Correctional & Juvenile Justice institutions into the DoCS Metro West Region to reside in the Region.

A female Aboriginal project officer will be recruited on a time limited basis (six months) to assist the evaluator with the project's development and consultation with the Aboriginal community and agencies. The evaluator will be involved in the recruitment of the Aboriginal Project Officer.

4.1 Needs Assessment Components

The needs assessment components will include:

4.1.1 Literature Review

Review current research regarding service provision for the client group.

- This component will require documenting and reporting on current research regarding service provision for the client group.

Assessment of client needs pre and post release from prison.

- This component will require documenting and reporting on the type and extent of the client's need compared to what actually exists in the Metro West Region.

Review the ways in which similar services for the client group have been developed, implemented and managed in other locations.

- This component will require identifying, documenting and reporting on models of evidenced based best practice for supporting the client group.

Identification of the key strategies which will assist in reducing the client group's incidence of recidivism.

- This component will require documenting the key strategies and identifying and reporting steps partners will need to take to implement these strategies.

4.1.2 Service Delivery

Identification of the key service partners in the development, implementation and management of this case management/brokerage service delivery model (this to

³ DoCS, Department of Corrective Services (DCS) and Justice Health, Department of Housing (DoH), Department of Health (DOH), Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), Centrelink and NGO family support services.

include identifying key AOD, mental health, family support & housing support services).

- This component will require documenting and reporting who are the ideal project partners to support the client group.

Identification of the key strategies for the pilot's service partners to consider so as to improve the client group's transitional experience leaving prison.

- This component will require documenting the key strategies and identifying and reporting steps partners will need to take to implement these strategies.

Identification of the key strategies which will support the client group's capacity to support and care for the children in their care.

- This component will require documenting the key strategies and identifying and reporting steps partners will need to take to implement these strategies.

4.1.3 Western Sydney Service Capacity

Identification of the capacity of family and child support services in Metro West to participate in the pilot.

- This component will require reviewing and reporting on Metro West family and child support services' organisational and structural supports which will assist them to provide services for the client group.

Identification of the capacity of State and Federal government agencies to support the pilot.

- This component will require reviewing and reporting on government agencies who are partners, their policy frameworks with regards to service provision for the client group and advice regarding situating the pilot in relation to these policy frameworks.

4.1.4 Challenges and Constraints

Identification of barriers to pilot implementation.

- This component will require identifying, documenting and reporting on potential barriers to service development, implementation and management. A necessary part of this process is identifying possible solutions to resolve the barriers.

4.1.5 Future Planning & Opportunities

Identification of opportunities to link this service delivery model to other projects targeting Aboriginal women, with dependent children, leaving prison.

- This component will require the Metro West Region services to be mapped and potential partnerships identified.

As five of the ten available properties are not committed, the consultant will also be required to:

- Identify those women most in need of housing and support in Metro West.
- Identify an evidenced based housing and support model most suited to supporting the identified group.
- Develop a project logic with accompanying project measures (based on best practice) based on a Results Based Accountability framework.

This component will require the consultant to identify those women most in need of housing and support and undertake a brief needs assessment in tandem with the needs assessment for Aboriginal women leaving prison pilot. It is expected that the research and interviews the consultant conducts in relation to the Aboriginal women leaving prison pilot will dovetail with the needs assessment of the women most in need of housing and support in Metro West project.

4.1.6 Evaluation Reporting

Development of a project logic with accompanying project measures (based on best practice) based on a Results Based Accountability framework.

- This component will require a project logic to be developed and service output and client outcome measures identified.

Collaboration

The pilot evaluation should be seen as a collaborative process which invites participation and actively engages those who are involved with the pilot's development. DoCS staff from the Nepean Network Office, Aboriginal Community Reference Group, WSSPAH Pilot Steering Committee members and staff from HomelessnessNSW.ACT will contribute to supporting the pilot evaluation and assist in linking the consultant with necessary government and non government agencies.

The consultant undertaking the evaluation should have experience in working with government and non government agencies. The consultant must have extensive experience working with the Aboriginal community, preferably the community in the Metro West area. The consultant must be prepared to work closely with DoCS, the female Aboriginal project officer, the Aboriginal Community Reference Group, the WSSPAH Pilot Steering Committee and HomelessnessNSW.ACT for the duration of the contract.

Key stakeholders

Key stakeholders for the evaluation include the Department of Community Services, the Department of Corrective Services (including Justice Health), the Department of Health, Health, Centrelink, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Aboriginal Community Reference Group, WSSPAH Pilot Steering Committee members.

Needs Assessment

7.1 Consultant Tasks

The consultant undertaking the needs assessment is responsible for:

- Participating in the recruitment of the Aboriginal Female Project Officer.
- Identifying the extent of the need of the client group. The client group includes those women most in need of housing and support as indicated in Evaluation Components as well as the pilot's client group (Aboriginal women leaving prison).
- Synthesising what is known in current research about service needs for the client group.
- Reviewing and assessing ways service provision has occurred for the client group in other locations and identifying evidenced based best practice.
- In consideration of the foregoing, develop recommendations for the WSSPAH Committee to consider in developing, implementing and managing the pilot relative to available resources.

7.2 NSW Department of Community Services and WSSPAH Steering Committee Tasks

DoCS Nepean Network Office project officer will be responsible for:

- Working with HomelessnessNSW.ACT to provide administrative support for the evaluation and to monitor progress of the consultancy in line with the project specifications.

WSSPAH Steering Committee will be responsible for:

- Providing direction and guidance to the evaluation consultant.

7.3 Female Aboriginal Project Officer Auspicing Agency

- The female Aboriginal Project Officer will assist the evaluator with the project's development and consultations with the Aboriginal community and agencies.

Evaluation Management

The evaluation will be overseen by Homelessness NSW.ACT and DoCS Nepean Network Office. The WSSPAH Committee has convened a Pilot Steering Committee to support the evaluation. The reference group will include representatives from the Aboriginal community, DoCS and the WSSPAH Committee.

The Pilot Steering Committee's role will be to provide direction and guidance to the evaluation consultant and to monitor the consultancy's progress in line with the project specifications. The consultant will be required to provide regular progress reports to the reference group.

The final evaluation report will be provided to the DoCS Metro West Regional Director, the Western Sydney Human Services Senior Officer's Group, the WSSPAH Committee and the Partnerships Against Homelessness (PAH) Committee.

Submitting an EOI and the EOI Selection Process

HomelessnessNSW.ACT is inviting your organisation to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) for providing the services identified in this information package.

An invitation to submit a quotation is accompanied by a specification of the proposed work to be delivered. The specification sets out the background to the requirement and what consultants are expected to provide in the EOI and a date for receipt of EOIs.

EOIs should be submitted by the Closing Date. All EOIs received by the Closing Date will be considered in the process of drawing up a short list of names.

The consultants who are short listed may be requested to provide a presentation in support of their EOI to the selection panel, as well as provide any additional or clarifying information as required.

Those consultants whose EOIs are unsuccessful will be informed promptly, and HomelessnessNSW.ACT will provide feedback on the quality of the submitted proposal if requested.

HomelessnessNSW.ACT is not bound to accept any EOI.

- To submit an EOI:
 1. Write a brief response to each of the selection criteria in Section 4, utilising the response template at Appendix A;

2. Attach the following documents:
 - your proposed budget for the consultancy
 - details of two referees from a government agency, or other organisation, for which you or your agency has conducted similar work.

Please provide the original EOI document and **three** complete photocopies.
EOIs must be postmarked no later than 31 January 2007, and should be addressed:

EOI: WSSPAH Pilot
Sue Cripps
HomelessnessNSW.ACT
Level 1
619 Elizabeth Street
REDFERN NSW 2016

If you have any questions about submitting an EOI, please ring Sue Cripps, Executive Officer, HomelessnessNSW.ACT on (02) 9319 7111.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

In order to ensure the fair and equal treatment of all applications, EOIs which are received late or are incomplete will not be considered by the Selection Panel. An EOI would be considered incomplete if it did not include all of the required attachments and/or did not address each of the selection criteria outlined in Section 8 below.

Selection Process

A Selection Panel chaired by the DPP, NNO will assess all applications against the criteria in Section 11 to determine each applicants' relative capacity to:

1. Provide the specified service.
2. Deliver a quality service which meets the Department's needs.
3. Conduct the project collaboratively with the service partners.
4. Provide value for money
5. Manage the project and ensure financial accountability.

The Selection Panel will assess which weighting to give to each of these assessment criteria and will determine funding recommendations.

Short listed tenderers may be asked to attend an interview with the selection panel.

The EOIs shall remain the property of DOCS. DoCS reserves the right to make enquiries of any other body which has used your services to verify any claims made in your EOI. With the exception of these two conditions, the EOIs will remain confidential documents.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

The act of inviting Expressions of Interest does not commit the Department of Community Services to the provision of funding to any prospective service provider.

Selection Criteria

The successful tenderer will need to demonstrate:

1. Understanding of the requirements of this brief
2. Demonstrated experience working with the Aboriginal community, preferably in Sydney's Metro West
3. Experience in working with the public sector
4. Experience in conducting evaluations within a human services environment
5. The ability to communicate sensitively with service providers
6. Experience in conducting research and consultation
7. Knowledge of the human services system as it relates to service provision for the client group.
8. Capacity to deliver on project requirements within the relevant time frames

Submissions should also include:

1. A plan and time line for conducting the pilot needs assessment, including the proposed start up date.
2. Details of the personnel who will be undertaking the project, their knowledge, skills and proposed responsibilities.
3. A clear outline of the proposed methodology for conducting the project (including the number of days expected to conduct each component).

Budget

Proposals up to \$40,000 are anticipated. Detail in your proposed budget for the project should include:

- Staffing costs
- Administration, travel and operating costs

11 Tentative Project Timeline

The indicative timescale for this project is provided below. This may need to be refined pending information obtained as a result of the expression of interest process.

December 2006	Call for expressions of interest
January 2007	Expressions of interest close
January 2007	Successful service provider identified and contract finalised
February 2007	Detailed Work Plan submitted
March 2007	Progress report submitted
May 2007	Final report submitted

The successful applicant will be required to provide written and verbal updates to the Department at specified points in the project. This will be agreed upon and specified in the contract.

Terms of Contract

The successful applicant will be required to enter into a contractual arrangement with HomelessnessNSW.ACT with standard terms and conditions.

The successful tenderer will be expected to complete the project by April/May 2007 or at another time as negotiated by HomelessnessNSW.ACT.

12 General Conditions

Lobbying

Any attempt by any applicant (after the issue of the EOI documentation and prior to the issuing of an acceptance by HomelessnessNSW.ACT) to exert influence on the outcome of the assessment process by lobbying HomelessnessNSW.ACT staff (or by way of an offer of money or other material means) or members of the selection panel, shall disqualify the tender from further consideration and render the EOI invalid.

Right to negotiate

HomelessnessNSW.ACT reserves the right to negotiate with short-listed applicants after the close of Expression of Interest.

Presentations

Short-listed applicants may be asked to attend an interview and make a presentation on their EOI.

Reservations

HomelessnessNSW.ACT does not bind itself to accept the lowest priced EOI nor any EOI.

Confidentiality

All documents submitted by applicants will be treated in confidence by HomelessnessNSW.ACT.

Intellectual Property Rights

The Department shall own the intellectual Property Rights of the material developed.

Ethical considerations

HomelessnessNSW.ACT expects that this evaluation and any associated research activities to be performed to high ethical standards.

EOI Response Template

Responses to this Expression of Interest should take the following format:

1. Executive Summary
2. Introduction
3. Proposed Methodology, to include:
 - a. Project timeline (include proposed start date)
 - b. Key milestones/deliverables
 - c. Proposed number of days assigned to undertake tasks
4. Selection criteria
5. Costing, to include:
 - a. Per diem rate
 - b. Estimated budget required to undertake specific components/tasks
 - c. Travel, administrative and staffing costs
6. Details and experience of all personnel to undertake the evaluation
7. Referee information

Appendix 2: Literature Review

***Aboriginal women post release
housing literature review***

July 2007

Eileen Baldry* & Ruth McCausland**

For: The needs assessment to support the development of the proposed *Aboriginal Women With Dependent Children Leaving Prison* Pilot Project

Contracted by: HomelessnessNSW.ACT, funded by Department of Community Services (DOCS) as part of the Western Sydney Strategic Plan Against Homelessness (WSSPAH).

*Associate Professor Eileen Baldry, Associate Dean (Education)
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, UNSW

** Ruth McCausland, PhD candidate, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, UNSW

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Aboriginal women post release housing literature review

Executive summary

Aboriginal women are the most rapidly growing group of prisoners in Australia. They are now approximately 30% of the NSW women's prison population.

These higher rates mean proportionally more Aboriginal women need support and assistance on re-entry to society. They return to highly disadvantaged communities with little social, health or housing support.

Background

The majority of Aboriginal women exiting prison have:

- Dependent children and extreme difficulty reuniting with them
- Very poor housing options if any
- A history of sexual and physical abuse and few options but to return to abusive situations
- Alcohol / drug problems and few culturally appropriate rehabilitative services to which to go
- Very poor physical and mental health

Literature on post-release housing and related issues relevant to aboriginal women with dependent children

Ex-prisoners in general

- Poor access to suitable housing with extreme difficulty in the private market
- Reluctance to go into congregate housing
- High levels of homeless upon release
- Poor agency coordination addressing these issues

Women ex-prisoners

Research establishes the importance of stable housing for women post-release, and for recidivism in particular. Women ex-prisoners suffer worse housing problems and higher levels of homelessness, debt, depression, isolation and social exclusion than men. There is a dearth of women specific appropriate post-release support services. They have a significant need for assistance with accommodation, finances, employment, family reunification and are at a high risk of poor mental and physical health outcomes.

Women ex-prisoners with children

Women releasees with children are often in an impossible situation:

- It is very difficult to get their children back without suitable accommodation
- Whilst trying to arrange their return they are likely to slip into homelessness and re-offending

Ex-prisoners and Homelessness

There are strong links between homelessness and offending. Suitable, supported and stable housing is associated with staying out of prison.

There is little in the way of systematic arrangements for case-managed supported housing for prisoners preparing to leave prison. This is particularly the case for those with complex needs.

Indigenous ex-prisoners

A disproportionate number of Indigenous people are caught in the vicious cycle of prison, homelessness, re-arrest and re-incarceration. The majority of Indigenous persons leaving prison return to economically and socially disadvantaged suburbs with poor infrastructure. There is a dearth of culturally appropriate and sensitive post-release services for Indigenous persons.

Indigenous women ex-prisoners

Indigenous women prisoners and ex-prisoners are the most severely disadvantaged group in the criminal justice system. Most have dependent children and are returning to unsuitable or no housing, unemployment, lack of health and rehabilitative services and abusive situations. They suffer alcohol or drug dependency, poverty, isolation, housing debt and unhelpful or absent partners. The lack of safe and affordable housing post-release is chronic.

Evaluation of current approaches to post release housing for Indigenous women with children and evidence of best practice

Current post-release housing for Aboriginal women in New South Wales is largely inadequate, inaccessible and uncoordinated.

There is a severe lack of empirical research or comprehensive theoretical or statistical analysis of post-release support for Indigenous women either in Australia or internationally. Many studies tend to be descriptive rather than evaluative. Therefore approaches in the general field are discussed.

Four approaches are discussed:

- Supported accommodation
- Throughcare/aftercare
- Holistic approach
- Addressing Aboriginal women's special needs

Supported accommodation

Stability of accommodation has been found to be related to positive post-release offending outcomes; program participants who were reported to be in stable accommodation were more likely not to re-offend and not be re-imprisoned than those who were not in stable accommodation. The few studies available including women indicate that suitable, stable housing with support helps resolve post-release institutionalised dependency post-release. Women who have this kind of support returned in very small numbers.

Throughcare/aftercare

Throughcare, in theory, provides continuous treatment/support and education for prisoners from entry into prison to their post-release surroundings. Aftercare is long-term community based treatment/support after release from prison or institutionalization. Throughcare increases the chance that programs received while in prison will be more successful. Case management for the releasee is essential as is integration and coordination via partnerships of services that address housing, health, employment and social isolation issues for ex-prisoners. There is no evaluation of throughcare with Indigenous persons exiting prison.

Holistic approach

Evaluations reveal that the provision of mere accommodation does not lead to the best outcomes; post-release accommodation for ex-prisoners must be holistic, addressing the wide range of difficulties faced by prisoners, especially the multiple and complex problems and issues faced by Indigenous women with children, upon their release. The Canadian Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge is an example of a culturally appropriate holistic approach.

Addressing Aboriginal women's special needs

Programs for Indigenous women leaving prison must be grounded in their cultural values, beliefs and realities, and should be developed in consultation with and run by Indigenous women. Yulawirri Nurai is an example of a program with the potential to provide such special needs supported accommodation.

Case studies

Sisters Inside, Guthrie House and Parramatta Transitional Centre are taken as Australian examples of Australian transitional and post-release support for women. It is noted that none of the examples available has publicly available evaluations of their programs and there appears to be no, or at least no information available on, Aboriginal women specific transitional or post-release supported housing programs in Australia.

Conclusion

The evidence suggests that an emphasis on throughcare and aftercare delivered through an Indigenous women-run case management approach; a focus on the particular issues facing Aboriginal women; and a holistic philosophy underpinning post-release services could provide a policy and program framework.

Aboriginal women post release housing literature review

Introduction

Aboriginal women are the most rapidly growing group of prisoners in Australia. In New South Wales, though they make up 2% of the female population, Aboriginal women make up approximately 30% of the women's prison population. They have higher rates of return to prison; higher numbers of dependent children; higher rates of mental health disorders; and experience higher rates of domestic and sexual violence and homelessness than their non-Indigenous counterparts (Lawrie 2002; Cunneen 2002; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2003; Butler and Milne 2003; Baldry & Maplestone 2005; Baldry et al 2006). Higher rates of imprisonment mean that there are proportionally more Aboriginal women than non-Aboriginal women needing support and assistance on re-entry to society. Aboriginal women leaving prison return to highly disadvantaged communities and areas with little in the way of housing support, protection from violence, employment opportunities or appropriate health care (Vinson 2007; Baldry & Maplestone 2005; Baldry et al 2006).

However, there is a dearth of research that explores the particular needs of Aboriginal women exiting prison not only in New South Wales but in Australia, and in turn, what post-release services and support may best assist in breaking the cycles of imprisonment, disadvantage and abuse for these women and their dependent children. This literature review canvasses what is known about the issues facing Indigenous women leaving prison and their dependent children, and what research and policy approaches in the area of post-release housing nationally and internationally may be drawn upon to inform the development of a case management/brokerage model for improving the capacity for independent living of Aboriginal women with dependent children in western Sydney.

Background

The most significant survey of Aboriginal women in prison in New South Wales, *Speak Out Speak Strong* (Lawrie 2002), found that most are single mothers with between 2 and 4 children, and that many are also responsible for the care of children other than their own biological children. 98 per cent of the women surveyed had a prior conviction as an adult (Lawrie 2002, 25). 82% of the women were on alcohol or drugs at the time of their last offence, and the study found that there was a strong connection between drug use and offending behaviour (Lawrie 2002, 45). The study also found that Aboriginal women in prison had long and serious histories of abuse (Lawrie 2002, 51).

Speak Out Speak Strong found that housing was a significant issue identified by Aboriginal women, many reporting that they had lost both their housing and children when imprisoned, and in order to regain custody of their children would need a stable environment and a place of residence upon release, which was reportedly difficult to obtain (Lawrie 2002, 27). 15% of women surveyed who had no permanent residence prior to incarceration were mothers with children (Lawrie 2002, 28). Most of the children of the women surveyed were being cared for by members of their extended family while they

were in prison, while some were in the care of the Department of Community Services (Lawrie 2002, 20). Transition back into the community was identified as one of the most difficult and testing times for the women, and a time at which appropriate support and services are vital (Lawrie 2002, 69). Many Aboriginal women commented on the need for additional rehabilitation and housing options run by Aboriginal people post release (Lawrie 2002, 74). The survey concluded that the impact of the imprisonment of these women is significant, with clear potential to cause further disadvantage to the broader Indigenous community and their children in particular (Lawrie 2002, 81)

It is known that Aboriginal women mostly enter prison with poor physical and mental health. A 2002 Queensland report noted that Indigenous female offenders entering custody reported higher rates of sexually transmitted diseases, higher rates of current pregnancies, higher rates of respiratory conditions and diabetes and lower rates of contraception use than non-Indigenous women. Domestic violence was identified as a health and safety risk for Indigenous female offenders, and Indigenous women represented a significant proportion of female offenders in incidents of self mutilation (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Policy Unit, Queensland Department of Corrective Services 2002, 16). A Victorian study also found that the majority of women incarcerated had dealt with or were dealing with serious psychiatric or suicide issues (Brenner 2002, 11).

Thirty three percent of Indigenous women surveyed for the 2001 NSW Inmate Health Survey reported being removed from their families as children (Butler and Milner 2003, 26). Aboriginal women experience the intergenerational and direct effects of decades of exclusionary policies such as removal of children, removal from land, inaccessible or inappropriate education, housing and health services and the institutionalisation of being represented in disproportional numbers in state care, in juvenile detention, in psychiatric institutions and in prisons (Lawrie 2003; Baldry & Green 2002). Aboriginal women have also been excluded from participating in decision making about their lives and futures.

Aboriginal women have been described as invisible to policy makers and program designers in a criminal justice context, with very little attention devoted to their specific needs and circumstances (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2005). The assumption often appears to be that Aboriginal women can access services designed for Aboriginal men or for women generally. Indications that Aboriginal women are the least likely of all groups of prisoners to find or engage with appropriate housing and support services post-release, particularly if they have dependent children, suggests that this is not the case. The lack of attention to the distinct needs of Indigenous women marginalises them and entrenches inequalities in service delivery, and can lead to intersectional discrimination (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2005). As Winsome Matthews has stated:

It is essential to recognise and provide for Indigenous women as a distinct group. For too long women's services have been compromised

by a lack of identified programs and facilities. Women end up having to use either Indigenous men's services, or mainstream services for women. They are disadvantaged both ways (quoted in ATSIJ 2003).

Literature on post-release housing and related issues relevant to aboriginal women with dependent children

Ex-prisoners in general

Meehan (2002, 7) evaluated much of the literature available at the time in this field and concluded that prisoners generally face the following problems in finding appropriate housing after release:

- ♦ The private rental market or 'mainstream' accommodation options are increasingly difficult for ex-prisoners to find.
- ♦ Arranging accommodation pre-release other than in hostels is particularly difficult.
- ♦ There is a lack of variety in housing options available to ex-prisoners outside of hostels.
- ♦ There is reluctance amongst prisoners to agree to hostel accommodation due to concerns of too much contact with other ex-offenders.
- ♦ Social isolation is a common experience for ex-prisoners who often end up homeless, in unstable or unsuitable housing.
- ♦ A large number of prisoners being released do not have a suitable place to which to go.
- ♦ Pre-release assistance in securing accommodation is inadequate.
- ♦ There is minimal coordination between government and non-government agencies regarding housing.

Meehan notes that ex-prisoners who are re-incarcerated consider unsuitable housing as a major factor in their unsuccessful transition to life outside Prison (2002,7).

Although some programs to address post-release housing and other social issues have been trialled more recently in NSW and particularly in Victoria, none address the specific circumstances of Aboriginal women.

Women ex-prisoners

There is research internationally and in Australia that points to the importance of stable housing for women post-release, and on the connection with recidivism in particular. Wilkinson's 1988 UK study found that a significant number of women prisoners were homeless or were in unstable housing arrangements at the time of arrest. 50% of the women were homeless on release and 66% of the women who were homeless prior to their last sentence were reincarcerated within months. Paylor (1995a), also in the UK, found that over half the men and women in his study experienced deteriorated housing situations post-release, many of them suffering levels of homelessness. Women were at greater risk of unsuitable accommodation or homelessness than men (quoted in Baldry and Maplestone 2005). A US survey of women in prison found high levels of homelessness and housing distress, mental illness, unemployment, drug use and lack of support, and in

particular, that women without housing were twice as likely to have been detained more than six times (Goswami and Schervish 2002).

Hamlyn & Lewis (2000) in their UK study found that 90% of women post release experienced social isolation and depression and barriers to inclusion in the broader community including lack of accommodation. Shewan et al (2000) found that 1/4 to 1/3 of all female drug fatalities in a region in Scotland were women who had been released from jail in the prior 12 months and implied that supported housing could reduce such fatal overdose rates. Similar findings from a study in Victoria by Davies and Cook (1998) indicated that 90% of a sample of women who died shortly after their release from prison had no fixed address at the time of death. The authors concluded that more suitable, stable, supported accommodation may have reduced these distressingly high numbers.

Fabb (1991) and Robson and Nancarrow (1991) in Victoria and Lewis and Hayes (1997) in NSW have suggested that women ex-prisoners' inability to establish positive social connections post-release may be associated with their inability to secure suitable housing. In Carnaby's retrospective study (1998) of women ex-prisoners and agencies in Victoria, 80% of the women claimed that securing appropriate housing was a significant factor in precluding their reoffending. They also said that they had had difficulties in finding accommodation due to factors including being ex-prisoners and sole parents with young children. Hartwell (2001) suggests that women with a mental illness post-release are particularly susceptible to homelessness.

Ritchie (2001), in discussion with 42 women recidivists in prison, outlines the severe difficulty facing both the women and their neighbourhoods as they return to highly disadvantaged communities that are supporting high numbers of returning ex-prisoners. Walsh (2003) argues that gender specific support services are desperately needed in the community to provide alternatives to prison and post-release supported accommodation.

As Martyres (2003, 7) has stated in relation to her research on mortality amongst women prisoners released in Victoria:

Most women who enter prison do so from a background of extreme social and economic disadvantage. Factors such as high unemployment rates, substance abuse, complex mental health needs and poor education impact on the lives of many women prisoners. It is estimated that up to eighty percent of women who enter the prison system in Victoria have a history of drug dependence. Most women prisoners have also experienced some form of sexual assault or family violence prior to imprisonment.

Baldry and Maplestone (2005) note that the research presents some consistent themes for women exiting prison, namely that:

- a large minority of women being released from prison do not have family support or suitable accommodation to which to go;

- pre-release information and support regarding post-release matters are grossly inadequate;
- ex-prisoners and those who are reincarcerated point to lack of suitable housing as a key factor in their unsuccessful transition to outside life;
- there is a severe lack of coordination / integration amongst appropriate government and non-government agencies on post-release matters;
- there are particular subgroups amongst women ex-prisoners, such as those with a mental illness and single women with children, who are more vulnerable and more likely to end up without support or adequate housing.

The women surveyed by Baldry et al (2006) had served shorter sentences, had returned to prison earlier and at a higher rate, had a higher rate of debt and in particular more housing debt and had a higher rate of homelessness than their male counterparts. Women appear to have had greater problems than their male counterparts securing suitable accommodation. The authors found in their research that moving often proved to be the most reliable predictor (other than increasing drug use) of returning to prison, and the more often that women moved, the more likely they were to return to prison. More than half the women surveyed moved twice or more with 90% of those who moved three times or more returning to prison.

Morgan et al (2000, 2) have found that there are well-documented gaps in service delivery for women exiting prison, their children and families. They state that women prisoners have different health and social needs and responsibilities compared with their male counterparts, and that they have a significant need for assistance with accommodation, finances, employment, family reunification and are at a high risk of poor mental and physical health outcomes. The authors found that children of women prisoners were highly likely to suffer emotional, physical and financial hardship during the mother's period of incarceration and in the long term. Sisters Inside, an advocacy and service delivery organisation for women prisoners, states that it consistently encounter difficulty when assisting women to find stable and appropriate housing options upon release from prison, which is essential to the recovery of children, the reunification of families, to stopping re-offending, to reducing post-release mortality rates and to ensuring that options exist beyond returning to violent partners (Sisters Inside 2007).

In NSW, there is only one supported accommodation service specifically for women post-release, Guthrie House, which has ten funded places. These places must also serve women seeking housing support for bail, women awaiting a Drug Court hearing and women on parole. Guthrie House will be discussed in more detail as a case study later in this literature review.

Women ex-prisoners with children

In Australia, women releasees with children have been described as finding themselves in an impossible situation: without suitable accommodation arranged before release, it is difficult to get their children back from foster or substitute care, however whilst they are trying to negotiate the many systems they must go through, their chances of slipping into homelessness and re-

offending grow, and they are often unable to complete everything necessary to establish a home where they can have their children (Baldry et al 2003; NSW Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues 1998). Children of imprisoned parents are at a higher risk of homelessness than other young people, possibly due to factors such as breakdowns in alternative living situations, going into substitute care and having severely disrupted childhoods (Legislative Council Standing Committee on Standing Issues 1998).

Sisters Inside has highlighted the fact that the lack of supported accommodation is compounded for ex-prisoners who have special needs, such as those with dependent children (2004). Ogilvie (2001) notes that satisfactory accommodation arrangements are crucial for women in attempting to regain access to children who have been placed in care situations. She also reports that in the absence of alternative accommodation, women may feel compelled to return to violent partners post-release. The *Bridging the Gap* project evaluation in Victoria noted that regaining custody of children was a difficult and protracted process for the participants in their program, given the need to establish themselves in stable accommodation to demonstrate that they were drug-free or to go through a custody application process (2003, 83).

Ex-prisoners and Homelessness

Research internationally suggests that there are strong links between homelessness and offending, with the experience of homelessness contributing to an increased likelihood of being imprisoned (Willis 2004, 6). The findings of the only significant research involving a large sample of people being released from NSW and Victorian prisons indicates that suitable, supported and stable housing is associated with staying out of prison (Baldry et al 2006).

The Victorian Homelessness Strategy Ministerial Advisory Committee *Working Report: Building Solutions for Individuals and Families who experience homelessness* (Victorian Department of Human Services 2001) highlighted and summarised critical problems common across NSW and Victoria at the time:

- Many prisoners without family or community support leave prison without any post-release support, including housing assistance, material aid and other services.
- No data is currently collected from people in the prison system regarding their housing status or risk of homelessness on release.
- Case management services within prisons do not currently include comprehensive assessment and exit planning in relation to housing issues.
- The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) funds a small number of post-release support services, but the SAAP Act precludes expansion of this role.
- Current prison environments and regulations inhibit communication and information dissemination, often delaying potential housing actions/outcomes.

- The homeless service system is often structured to respond once a person is homeless, and is not geared to effect the transition from prison to housing seamlessly.

Indigenous ex-prisoners

A disproportionate number of Indigenous people are caught in the vicious cycle of prison, re-arrest and re-incarceration. Unsuitable housing or homelessness is likely to compound the risk of arrest and imprisonment, which in turn feeds back into housing problems (Baldry et al 2003). Indigenous people living on the streets have been identified as particularly vulnerable to police interference and harassment (Walsh 2007, 7). A lack of effective pre and post-release programs for Indigenous people leaving custody has been identified as contributing to this situation (Keys Young 1998). Indigenous people are over-represented in all sectors of the homeless population in NSW, but most prominently in SAAP and amongst those living in improvised dwellings (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2003, 634).

Baldry and Maplestone (2003) have pointed to the location of post-release housing as a key factor in recidivism, noting that many of the participants in their study had no option but to return to economically and socially disadvantaged suburbs with poor infrastructure.

Other research points to the importance of culturally relevant services:

It is futile and perhaps dangerous to impose non-Indigenous norms onto Indigenous people. If Indigenous homelessness is to be addressed effectively, it must be understood in an historical and cultural context that takes account of past injustices ... Without taking this historical perspective into account, and the sustained marginalised treatment of Indigenous people by the State, it is not possible to fully identify and address the barriers to Indigenous people, and women in particular, accessing appropriate services. (Cooper and Morris 2003, 7).

Indigenous women ex-prisoners

The most severely disadvantaged group amongst all participants in the most comprehensive study of post-release issues in NSW (Baldry et al 2006) were Indigenous women. These women experienced the highest rate of re-incarceration and homelessness in the sample. They came from, and after prison returned to, a very small cluster of highly disadvantaged suburbs, and moved frequently within these same disadvantaged areas. The NSW Indigenous women in the study had had a dedicated worker who had contacted them prior to release and the authors thus expected that they might manage better with that support, but they did not. Further investigation indicated that the Indigenous women's worker was battling extreme odds in trying to help her clients. A fundamental problem was her inability to find suitable housing for most of the women. The authors surmised there were a number of reasons for this. Most of these women were multiple recidivists and had little in the way of accumulated social or material goods prior to incarceration. Most had children and needed appropriate housing in an appropriate area; some had parole conditions precluding them from living with

various family members; a number had debts or other problems with the Housing Department. All had served short sentences, and cycling in and out of prison was almost the norm; almost a way of life for these women. Going to prison did not prepare them for nor create pathways to successful community living.

Women sole parents (some of whom were Indigenous) were the next most disadvantaged group in the study, with many having serious problems securing suitable housing for themselves and their children. This seemed to be associated with cumulative problems such as alcohol or drug dependency, poverty, isolation, housing debt and unhelpful or absent partners (Baldry et al 2006).

Research and consultations conducted by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner emphasised the importance of housing and emergency accommodation options for Indigenous women when released from prison; the importance of being able to access a broad range of programs upon release, including healing; and the lack of coordination of existing government and community services, which has the result of limiting the accessibility of services to Indigenous women (2005). Anecdotal evidence suggests that Indigenous women have difficulty in accessing support programs upon their release and are left to fend for themselves, sometimes leading them to homelessness, returning to abusive relationships or re-offending (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2003).

A 2000 report on homeless Indigenous women in Brisbane noted that Indigenous women who are discharged from correctional facilities without support, appropriate transitional accommodation or money also often find their way to inner city parks and public spaces. Many would return home but do not have enough money, and so go to the parks looking for a loan or for company. These women are vulnerable to a range of factors including re-arrest for public order offences (Coleman 2000, 13). When Sisters Inside have surveyed Indigenous women regarding what they need to stay out of prison after their release into the community, they state the response universally includes safe and affordable housing (Kilroy 2005, 25).

Vinson has highlighted the geographical concentration of Aboriginal women prisoners (and thus presumably ex-prisoners) in NSW, showing that 30% came from just 3 suburbs in Sydney (cited in Baldry et al 2006).

Children of Aboriginal women prisoners

There have been very few studies of the needs of children of prisoners and as far as could be ascertained none of the needs of children of Aboriginal women prisoners or ex-prisoners. Nevertheless results from a number of reports give a picture of the needs these young people may be expected to have.

The impact of incarceration and associated matters is proportionally far greater upon Indigenous children than others due to the high over-representation of Indigenous persons in custody. In communities where large

numbers of men and, to a lesser extent, women are absent due to incarceration, the implications for the parenting, development and support of these children is profound (Woodward 2003), more so when the parent is the child's own. Often children will experience a mixture of out of home care (state based) and informal (family based) and are likely to be growing up in highly disadvantaged communities. So consistent and stable parenting experiences are likely to be needs of many of these children.

A significant number of these children may have suffered abuse from carers or others whilst their mothers and fathers are in prison. Even when there is no abuse children can be expected to have a range of behavioural problems including: fear and anxiety, uncertainty about the justice system, sadness, belief that they did something wrong that caused the parent to leave, anger and guilt, confusion about their parent's behaviour and the conflict between this and how they have been taught to behave themselves, physical symptoms, such as increased health problems, regressive behaviour, such as bed-wetting, shame and isolation (Tudball 2000). They will need safe and secure housing and counselling and support to address these traumas. It should be noted that these needs are based on work with non-Indigenous children of prisoners.

As the evidence is that a large number of children of Aboriginal women prisoners are young (below 6 years), their particular vulnerability and development needs should be addressed. To date there is little information on what those needs are and how they might be addressed (Tomaino et al 2005).

Evaluation of current approaches and evidence of best practice

It is clear from the findings of the research that is available that culturally appropriate and immediate post-release accommodation and support is crucial to rebuilding Aboriginal women's lives and diverting them from returning to prison (Baldry et al 2006). It is also apparent that current post-release housing for Aboriginal women in New South Wales is largely inadequate, inaccessible and unco-ordinated (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2005). It is important to note that this is generally the case for the majority of ex-prisoners in NSW – this state has the greatest number of prisoners in Australia with over 22,000 releasees per year, however there are only six NGO dedicated accommodation services providing about 50 places and finding accommodation or any other suitable service is extremely difficult (Baldry et al 2003). That said, the specific issues facing Aboriginal women with dependent children outlined above mean that dedicated post-release housing should be considered urgent and a matter of priority.

This area is largely marked by a dearth of empirical research or comprehensive theoretical or statistical analysis, and many studies tend to be descriptive rather than evaluative. However, there exist some studies and analyses of other policies and programs that are of relevance in considering the development of a model for appropriate post-release housing for Aboriginal women with dependent children in western Sydney.

Supported stable accommodation

Australian based and international studies have drawn similar conclusions about the connection between accessing adequate and appropriate transitional support programs and the decrease in re-offending behaviours (Ward et al 1991; Ramsay 1986 in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2005).

Baldry and Maplestone (2005) found that suitable, stable housing with support would have helped resolve post-release institutionalised dependency for most of the women in their study who were returned to prison. They found that those women who had this kind of support returned in very small numbers. The authors noted that Victoria and Western Australia are investing significantly more than in the past in post-release support to reduce recidivism rates and these projects are already showing some positive results.

The evaluation of the *Bridging the Gap* program in Victoria found that stability of accommodation was related to positive post-release offending outcomes; program participants who were reported to be in stable accommodation were more likely not to re-offend and not be re-imprisoned than those who were not in stable accommodation (2003, 101). Best practice suggests that the best way of providing practical assistance to prisoners after their release is to provide them with supported accommodation, where they can receive food, shelter and emotional support while they re-establish their lives (Walsh 2004, 11)

Throughcare/aftercare

Throughcare has been identified as a best-practice principle in the transition management of prisoners (Walsh 2004, 7). Throughcare has been defined as programs designed to provide continuous treatment/support and education for prisoners from entry into prison to their post-release surroundings. Aftercare has been described in terms of long-term community based treatment/support after release from prison or institutionalisation (Baldry 2003). Throughcare and aftercare are models of service delivery that have been introduced in various jurisdictions in recent years, most notably in the United Kingdom. Research provides evidence that the throughcare approach - with longer term, coordinated post-release support - increases the chance that treatment or rehabilitation received while in prison will be more successful (Criminal Justice Social Work Development Centre for Scotland 2004, 2) The key to the success of throughcare is that all agencies involved in an offender's life pre and post-release must deliver their services in a coordinated and integrated manner (Criminal Justice Social Work Development Centre for Scotland 2004, 3). In the United Kingdom, a new policy approach has been introduced of correctional authorities accepting responsibility for the resettlement of ex-prisoners, aftercare services and sentence management (Ward 2001, 7). In this approach, the focus is on services that address housing, employment and social isolation issues for ex-prisoners by developing a 'community partnership' approach drawing on local service providers (Ward 2001, 8).

The key component of a successful throughcare system has been described as case management, where prisoners are allocated a specific worker who is dedicated to ensuring that they receive the treatment or services they require

while in custody and upon their release (Walsh 2004, 7). It has been recommended that the case manager not have a supervisory or disciplinary role, but rather should be the central contact point for prisoners and their families, brokering services and providing support (Boryzycki and Baldry 2002). Ward (2001, 52) recommends providing specialist housing advice, support and brokerage service to prisoners at entry and towards the end of their sentence, including crisis intervention early in the sentence to maintain current housing, negotiate reduced public housing rent and/or organise storage of possessions. Most recently, Walsh's examination of the impact of the criminal justice system on people living in poverty in Queensland (2007, 82) has recommended that aftercare services be funded at a sufficient level to ensure the provision of case management services to all prisoners upon their release, including housing, job search and general welfare assistance.

Willis has noted that SAAP clients living in stable accommodation were generally in this situation as a direct result of the work of their supporting agency, and that clients who were able to leave prison directly into supported accommodation, particularly where this had been arranged before release, were more likely to be in stable accommodation than others who did not have such arrangements in place (2004, 6). The evaluation of the *Bridging the Gap* program in Victoria found that very few participants became homeless for any significant period while engaged with the process due to efforts of workers in assisting participants in finding and maintaining accommodation (2003, 78).

The NSW Department of Corrective Services launched its Throughcare Strategic Framework in January 2003 (NSW Department of Corrective Services 2003, 12).

The aim of the program is to create linkages between the Department of Corrective Services, other relevant government agencies and non-government organisations. According to the department:

Throughcare is the co-ordinated and integrated approach to reducing re-offending by people who are the responsibility of Corrective Services, from their first point of contact with the Department to the completion of their legal orders and their transition to law-abiding community living (New South Wales Department of Corrective Services, 3).

However the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner has noted that this leaves a person exiting prison, having served their full sentence, without access to this program (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2005).

Holistic approach

Another best practice principle that has emerged from international literature over the past decade is that of the need for holistic post-release services (Walsh 2004, 8). Dutreix (2001) noted that women ex-offenders' crime rates could be reduced as a result of different housing policy which addressed the issue from a broad and holistic perspective, including increasing public housing stock, further funding for emergency and transitional accommodation

and providing appropriate support services (quoted in Baldry and Maplestone 2005).

Evaluations of various post-release housing initiatives point to the reality that the provision of mere accommodation will not necessarily bring about the best outcomes in terms of rehabilitation and recidivism: post-release accommodation for ex-prisoners must be holistic in nature, addressing the wide range of difficulties faced by prisoners upon their release (Ward 2001; Kidney 1991 in Walsh 2004, 59). One facility referred to as best practice is that of Project Green Hope in the United States, which offers accommodation, practical assistance and emotional support to female ex-prisoners for six months after their release, as well as aftercare for a further six months (in Walsh 2004, 59). This program is comprised of three phases: the orientation phase, during which the women receive intensive individual counselling and assistance in locating employment and accessing relevant treatment programs; the intermediate phase, during which the women engage in employment, education or training and work with staff to develop living skills and work skills; and the discharge phase, during which the women prepare to move out of the facility by developing a housing plan, exploring vocational goals and setting up social supports (Walsh 2004, 60).

Research by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner in this area concluded that any strategies developed should not be seen purely as addressing the post-release needs of Aboriginal women, but rather as responding to their circumstances holistically. Consultations on post-release support programs available to Indigenous communities identified the need to move away from reliance on mainstream western-style programs to a more holistic approach, which seeks to not only address offending behaviours but also to focus on healing the distress and grief experienced by many Indigenous women and their communities (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2005).

Like Australia, there is a significant over-representation of Indigenous people in the criminal justice system in Canada and evidence that mainstream programs do not adequately respond to the needs of Indigenous people (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2005). Healing has formed an important part of alternative approaches to Indigenous involvement in the criminal justice systems in Canada over the past decade, with the establishment of 'healing lodges' by the Correctional Service of Canada and various provincial governments. Healing lodges are a form of correctional facility rather than a post-release service, premised on the notion that a continuum of support is necessary from the point of incarceration through to the point of reintegration into the community. Services and programs are offered that reflect Aboriginal culture and incorporate Indigenous traditions and beliefs, and are tailored for individuals with a focus on preparation for release into the wider community (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2005).

The healing lodge concept began with the establishment more than a decade ago of the Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge for Aboriginal women, a 30 bed

minimum to maximum security facility available to women inmates who wish to practice a traditional Aboriginal holistic way of life and who have been sentenced to a low or medium security facility. Although managed by the Correctional Service of Canada, the facility is staffed primarily by Indigenous women, and the role of Elders is vital to the running of the centre. It provides a safe place for Aboriginal women offenders and their children, with an emphasis on the unique needs of Aboriginal women including acknowledgment of the discrimination and hardship many face. A follow-up study has found that the recidivism rate of offenders who were admitted to Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge is low (Correctional Service of Canada in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2005). Nevertheless strong evaluative evidence for this model having ongoing post-release success, in the absence of similar healing houses in the community, is not available.

Addressing the specific needs of Aboriginal women

A third best practice principle that has been identified is the importance of addressing the special needs of specific groups that experience greater difficulties in reintegrating in the community than others – including women, particularly those with dependent children, and Indigenous prisoners (Walsh 2004, 10). From her review of the literature in this area, Walsh recommends that programs directed at Indigenous prisoners must be grounded in their own cultural values, beliefs and realities, and that programs for Indigenous prisoners should be developed in consultation with, and preferably by, Indigenous people, and run by Indigenous people (Thompson 2000; Yeboah 2000; Munro and Jauncey 1991; Alexander 1987; Hazlehurst 1985 in Walsh 2004, 55). Based on her research, Goulding recommends that acknowledgement of the value, diversity and richness of Aboriginal culture should be a priority in any program or service delivery for urban Aboriginal women (Goulding 2004, 47).

Yulawirri Nurai, located on the central coast of New South Wales, is an Indigenous Corporation established in 1996 in response to the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC), whose role is to provide support and assistance to Aboriginal people in New South Wales with their accommodation, employment, educational, legal and training needs before, during and after their release from prison. A women-specific post-release program is funded by NSW Department of Corrective Services Community Grants program, which includes provision for the salary of the Aboriginal Women's Post-release and Case Management Officer as well as some additional running costs such as rent and administration. The service relies on the support of volunteer staff for the ongoing functioning of the program (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2004).

The post-release officer at Yulawirri Nurai supports Aboriginal women exiting NSW prisons with their needs, including accommodation, health, custody issues, employment and education. It is the only such position funded by the Department of Corrective Services in New South Wales. The post-release worker at Yulawirri Nurai aims to develop a supportive relationship with

women during their incarceration and prior to their release, in order to establish an understanding of the woman's individual needs. Unlike the Throughcare Strategy, Yulawirri Nurai continues to provide support to women well after they have completed their orders. The post-release worker currently sees women at the Emu Plains and Mulawa Correctional Centres, as well Grafton, Berrima and Broken Hill. When recently assessed, the worker was supporting approximately 100 women, including 40 releasees (of whom one third were estimated to be homeless). Yulawirri Nurai is reportedly unable to receive funding to allow them to commence operating as a post-release accommodation option for Aboriginal women (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2005).

Case studies

Sisters Inside

Sisters Inside is a community-based organisation, established in Queensland in 1992, that plays an advocacy and service delivery role for women in the criminal justice system. Sisters Inside's Management Committee members are made up of women in prison and women outside. The work of the organisation is premised on the principle that women in prison are the experts in identifying what is needed to support them through the successful transition process to the community. Sisters Inside state that it is impossible to consider issues related to women in the criminal justice system without taking account of their children, and that maintenance of family relationships is critical to women's capacity to reintegrate successfully with the community following release (Sisters Inside 2000). Sisters Inside employs Indigenous workers to work with Indigenous women in prison and upon their release into the community.

Guthrie House

Guthrie House is a supported accommodation service in inner-western Sydney for women who have been in contact with the criminal justice system. The program is typically three months in length and provides residential accommodation for women with children, 24-hour support and supervision, social work services including case management, drug and alcohol assessment and counselling, individual counselling and group work, living skills training, information and education sessions, recreational outings, court reports and assistance with appropriate post-discharge accommodation. Referrals are made by workers in correctional services, parole officers, or staff from other Government departments. As noted above, Guthrie House is currently funded to provide ten residential places.

Parramatta Transitional Centre

Parramatta Transitional Centre is a pre-release minimum security, community-based facility designed to prepare selected NSW female prisoners for release from prison. From this setting, the women go into the community for counselling, education, employment and recreation (Lynch 2000, 2). Staff are all female, non-uniformed, and perform custodial, welfare and referral roles. To be eligible, clients must be serving the last 3-18 months of their sentence; have no active drug or alcohol problem; demonstrate commitment

to specific goals; and be of a suitable medical assessment. The case management approach of the Centre is designed to empower clients and assist them to take control of their lives and decisions, with intensive contact with staff (Lynch 2000, 4). Residents at the Centre participate in the Mothers' and Children's Program which allows selected women to have their pre-school children reside with them full-time, and for older children to spend weekends and school holidays with them. The Centre also works with Aboriginal workers both in the Department and in the community to support Aboriginal women at the Centre (Lynch 2000, 9). In the last financial year, 14 women resided at the Centre (Department of Corrective Services 2006).

The most critical welfare issues identified by women at the Centre reportedly relate to accommodation and access to government benefits, and women residing in the Centre participate actively with staff in interactions with housing agencies and Centrelink prior to release. An important aspect of the Centre has been identified as the rapport developed with many relevant agencies in the greater Parramatta area, including the development of on-site programs (Lynch 2000, 11).

Conclusion

From the literature reviewed above, it is clear that stable and supported post-release housing is crucial to reducing recidivism and assisting ex-prisoners to reintegrate into the community. It is also apparent that Aboriginal women leaving prison in NSW have specific and special needs that are not currently being met and that there is a significant dearth of empirical research or comprehensive analysis about best practice services and support.

The evidence suggests that an emphasis on throughcare and aftercare delivered through an Indigenous women-run case management approach; a focus on the particular issues facing Aboriginal women; and a holistic philosophy underpinning post-release services could provide a policy and program framework.

This review has highlighted examples gleaned from information that is publicly available about existing programs and approaches that could provide some guidance for this project. However, the lack of comprehensive evaluation of such programs is a significant challenge. It is hoped that this project will go some way to further investigating and responding to the need for appropriate post-release housing for Aboriginal women with dependent children in western Sydney

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Appendix 3: Agency Questionnaire

A Needs Analysis of Aboriginal Women (with Dependent Children) Leaving Prison in Western Sydney

Type of documentary information to be sought from Agencies in Metro West (this may be modified and added to by information gained during interviews with Aboriginal women inmates and Community Correctional officers so is only a guide).

Can the agency provide the following information or as much as is available and relevant:

Annual Report or equivalent

What type of services are provided including whether the services are office based, phone, outreach, mobile etc?

Range of services provided (be specific)

Staff – are there any Aboriginal women staff members? Any staff who have particular skills, training &/or experience working with Aboriginal women, with women leaving prison, with Aboriginal women and children?

Where is the service located?

Geographical reach of services

Population groups serviced

Capacity of the service(s) ie how many clients can be provided with service / support at any one time.

Capacity to expand/take more clients such as Aboriginal women with dependent children leaving prison

Number of Aboriginal women with dependent children provided with services in the past two years

Any services targeted at the needs of Aboriginal women with dependent children

Any services targeted at the needs of women, Aboriginal women in particular leaving prison.

Managers of agencies will be asked to provide any other information they think may be useful in mapping the services appropriate to the support needs of Aboriginal women with dependent children leaving prison

Appendix 4: Aboriginal women prisoners' interview guide
A Needs Analysis of Aboriginal Women (with Dependent Children)
Leaving Prison in Western Sydney

Aboriginal Inmate questions

Guiding Questions

I'd like to talk with you first about your children:

1. How many dependent children do you have and how old are they?
2. Do you expect that your children will live with you when you are released?
 - a. If so how do you think this will be organised?
 - b. If not where do you think they will live?
3. Are there any other things to do with your children when you are released that worry you?
4. Where do you expect to live when you are released?
5. What do you think are the main problems for you and other Aboriginal women when released from prison?
(Prompts: accommodation, loneliness, health, drugs, money, jobs, problems with family, reporting to parole ...)
6. What kind of services do you think that you, and women like you need when they get out of prison? (explore each answer- ie, in what way could that service be helpful?)
(Prompts- family violence support, AOD rehabilitation services, mental health support, child-care support, support for survivors of sexual or physical abuse, housing support, education & employment services)
7. In your experience (or from what you have seen happen for other women) how easy is it to get these services? *(ask about each one mentioned)*
8. How important is it to have an Aboriginal service or an Aboriginal worker available post-release? Why did you answer the way you did?
9. Have you got any stories of useful services for Aboriginal women on release from prison? You don't have to name the services if you don't want to - just describe the service and why it was helpful.
10. Some women have trouble staying out of prison. What do you think the reasons for this are?

11. In your experience, or from what you have seen, when women do manage to stay out of prison, why do you think this is? Are there particular things that help?
12. Is there anything else you'd like to say about what happens when a woman is released from prison?
13. Finally, when do you expect to be released?

Appendix 5: Community Correctional Officers' interview guide

A Needs Analysis of Aboriginal Women (with Dependent Children) Leaving Prison in Western Sydney

Community Corrections' staff

Guiding Questions

1. What is your experience working with Aboriginal women post-release?
2. What do you think the needs of Aboriginal women with dependent children are: pre-release; upon release; the first few weeks; in the longer term?
3. What services do you liaise with in the Western Sydney area to assist Aboriginal women with dependent children post-release?
4. What has been your experience in linking Aboriginal women to services in Western Sydney?
5. How helpful are the services you have been using /linking women to? Please elaborate on why services are / are not helpful.
6. In your experience what are the most difficult post-release circumstances for Aboriginal women with dependent children?
7. What support and services do you think are needed & would make a difference to these women successfully reintegrating into the community?
8. Would you like to add anything further about the needs of Aboriginal women with dependent children being released from prison?

Appendix 6: Factors

Example of categorisation of factors in segments of the project model

Section	Detail	Example(s)
1. Correctional Services / Prison Support	This section is important for pre-release support / services / planning for release. It covers all support services within prisons.	Protective / Risk factors may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support in prisons (eg Aboriginal liaison and community workers) • Occasional support services such as refuges • Education / development programs within prisons • Pre-release support and planning • Probation and parole requirements • Mothers and children programs
2. Family / Carers / Friends	This section encompasses the relationship women have to their families, partners, and extended social networks. It also includes kinship ties.	Protective / Risk factors may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong and useful ties with family (who may be currently looking after dependent children) • Unhelpful relationships with 'friends' that continue cycles of crime • Domestic violence situation with partners
3. Culture	An integral section for the development and assessment of protective factors in the lives of Aboriginal women.	Protective / Risk factors may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of belonging • Strength in knowing history • Healing • Potential disconnection • Living away from own land and traditional connections
4. Dependent Children	The children who are deemed dependent. This section is important, as women may not necessarily access their dependent children immediately after release.	Protective / Risk factors may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age of children • Level of support required • Access to children upon release • Support for children • Children can have their own model too
5. Self	Looking at individual issues for each woman.	Protective / Risk factors may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AOD issues • Relevant family history
6. Aboriginal Specific Organisations	Aboriginal-run organisations that are specific in their delivery of services to Aboriginal individuals, communities and populations.	Protective / Risk factors may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of evidence supports that many Aboriginal clients will access Aboriginal specific organisations before non-Aboriginal organisations
7. Support Organisations / 'Welfare' Systems	Broader support services, such as governmental support, and not for profit support organisations.	Protective / Risk factors may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government agencies • Not-for-profit organisations
8. Education / Employment	Any educational or employment information – not necessarily formally recognised training or paid work.	Protective / Risk factors may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any training • Educational history • Goals for the future • Literacy / numeracy
9. Broader Communities	This section includes important information such as geographical area, community attitudes, access to public transport, etc.	Protective / Risk factors may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geographical region • Access to public transport • Attitudes to people exiting prison • Attitudes to Aboriginal women
10. Legal Issues	Legal support and / or items that are relevant to the women.	Protective / Risk factors may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to children • AVOs • Debt issues

Appendix 7: Agency categorisation

AWWDCEP Project: Data from surveys (27 to date)

Please note: Services / organisations are analysed into five categories:

6. High-level support
7. Medium-level support
8. Occasional support
9. Other
10. For Children and young people

At this stage, a service is allocated into one category only (i.e. best fit)

High-level support		
Broad Examples	Examples of actual organisations	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Directly support Aboriginal women exiting prison (client group) May directly support Aboriginal women within prison Aboriginal staff Case management structure Operational in programs within prisons Capacity to expand (where possible) Programs for Aboriginal women – educational, etc Supported accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Muru Mittigar (check spelling – it changes) <p>Model – Aboriginal specific organisations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 Aboriginal staff Range of support services Day release programs out of Bolwarra Agreements with probation and parole Based in Cranebrook, services the Penrith LGA Small case load (4 reported) Reports capacity to expand In the process of MOU with Mt Druitt Aboriginal Justice Group to be accepted

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linked in with other organisations • Intensive support, long term 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support women exiting prison with employment options
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jessie Street Domestic Violence Services <p>Model – Support Organisations / ‘Welfare’ Systems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual case management for women in prison • Supported accommodation for women WITHOUT dependent children • Educational (group work) programs in prisons • 2 Aboriginal support workers • Work with Emu Plains, Bolwarra and Dillwynia • In the region • Working relationship with other organisations • Organisation at capacity • In the region
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Penrith Women’s Refuge <p>Model – Support Organisations / ‘Welfare’ Systems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported accommodation for women and their dependent children (both crisis and medium-term) • Individual case management • A number of dedicated Aboriginal workers • Organisation commitment to Aboriginal communities • Educational (group work) programs in prisons • Work with Emu Plains, Bolwarra and Dillwynia

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working relationship with other organisations • In the region • Includes support programs for children and young people (dependents) • Capacity to provide specialist accommodation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cawarra Women's Refuge <p>Model – Aboriginal specific organisations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refuge for Aboriginal women and their dependent children • Case management support • Organisation attends Expos Days in prisons (Dilwynia and Bolwara) • Current experience with women exiting prison relationship with Office of Community Housing (need more detail) • Reports a capacity to expand
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wentworth Area Community Housing <p>Model – Support organisations / 'welfare' systems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This government organisations reports providing the housing to Cawarra and Penrith Women's Refuge • WACH reports holding the properties set aside for the pilot project
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW Department of Health, Justice Health – Aboriginal Health Unit <p>Model – Support organisations / 'welfare' systems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct service provision to Aboriginal women in prison – health focus • Reports an aim to work with general Aboriginal Health workers too, especially when people exit prison • Report high workload • Aboriginal staff

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal Medical Service, Western Sydney <p>Model – Aboriginal specific organisations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community controlled Aboriginal organisation Long-standing connection with Aboriginal populations and communities Long-standing connection with Aboriginal people who are incarcerated AMSWS accesses Aboriginal clients in some prisons (with a range of services), and reports many go on to access them when exiting prison Health needs, including sexual health and dental Wellbeing and emotional services, including counselling, mental health assessments Includes methadone treatment programs
Mid-level support		
Broad Examples	Examples of actual organisations	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal staff Directly support Aboriginal women Mid-level support (intensive to medium term) Examples of good / effective community standing Demonstrate an ability to work with client group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal Prison and Family Unit, St Marys <p>Model – Aboriginal specific organisations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Branch of the Aboriginal Legal Service One female Aboriginal identified position for all female prisons, and Juvenile Justice in the state. Support role, not intensive case management. Responds to the needs of the day Support services available, but the

		<p>stretch and need of the client group for the whole of NSW seems overwhelming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works in prisons and exiting prison. However, given the current incarcerated population, it is not clear how many long-term exited women this position could see
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WSAHS – Aboriginal Health Service Delivery & Program <p>Model – Aboriginal specific organisations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is not clear the direct capacity of this service to women, or acting as coordinator to create actual more specific links with smaller organisations / affiliated organisations delivering services • Case management and counselling in a wide-range of areas • General health support (some in hospitals, some in centres) • Reports capacity to make this an area of support: “The Aboriginal Health Unit would embrace any involvement of Aboriginal Health in supporting Aboriginal women with children exiting prison.” • Unit is called Winnan Gidyal • Report an approach that meets the needs of all members of Aboriginal families – including children and young people

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hawkesbury Nepean Community Legal Centre Inc. Aboriginal Legal Access Service. <p>Model – Aboriginal specific organisations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal identified position Attends open days in prisons to outline service provision Services three LGA areas of the region (Hawkesbury, Baulkham Hills and Nepean) Legal-related matters Including family support (which may be of benefit with dependent children)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Restorative Centre <p>Model – Correctional Services / Prison Support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal male staff member, Aboriginal Advisory Committee and Aboriginal female cultural advisor Ongoing connections and work with Aboriginal organisations Will co-case manage Outreach service available, case management system (15-30 per worker) Assessment in prisons prior to release 12-month support to clients Support in many areas impacting prison populations Sydney office (and Hunter) so outreach Ability to advocate Currently high workload Reports stable housing as greatest need

Occasional support		
Broad Examples	Examples of actual organisations	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal staff, occasional Aboriginal support or links to Aboriginal communities Group work service delivery Not intensive support Specialist support (e.g. faith-based holistic support) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SWAHS – Blacktown City Mental Health <p>Model – Support Organisations / ‘Welfare’ Systems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specialist staff in working with Aboriginal women and families This service is for acute admissions because of mental health concerns Case management structure
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Court Primary Care Centre, Nepean Hospital <p>Model – Support Organisations / ‘Welfare’ Systems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily a Needle and Syringe Program (NSP), with affiliated health needs of IDUs Relevant for clients that may continue using on release from prison
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal Catholic Ministry <p>Model – Aboriginal specific organisations (check)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reports a standing within Aboriginal communities, especially for women. Christian focus, reports not being exclusively Catholic Group work – but expects self-direction – so maybe at the long-term rehabilitation end of support Peer support service? Aboriginal women support through volunteer support? Second-hand support for children and young people too that may prove useful Weekly faith-based support in prisons In the geographical area

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day-release programs from Bolwarra • This organisation reports counselling support but I think this may mean the priest support (?)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wise Employment <p>Model – Educational / Employment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office located in Penrith • Employment training and support • Contact within Dillwynia • Currently, Aboriginal male worker, Indigenous Project Co-ordinator • Not sure how the ‘people with disabilities’ (including AOD) works
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link Up NSW <p>Model – Aboriginal specific organisations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify location – Lawson, NSW • Aboriginal community-controlled organisation • Currently work with women in prison relating access/custody of dependent children (Dillwynia and Emu Plains) • Broader cultural-connection work too
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guthrie House <p>Model – Support Organisations / ‘Welfare’ Systems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not located in geographical area (Enmore, Inner West NSW) • Lengthy waiting list • Accommodation for three months • Commitment to servicing the needs of Aboriginal women, currently one Aboriginal worker (unclear this is a specified position) • Works with women exiting and involved broadly in the criminal justice

		<p>system, including the dependent children of pre-school age</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compulsory group programs and intensive case management (including with clients who may have exited the housing and have their own accommodation) • Has experience with AOD case management (especially methadone programs)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centrelink (Penrith) – Prison Services Unit <p>Model – Support Organisations / ‘Welfare’ Systems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial support for prisoners exiting • One Aboriginal female position (although unclear that this is a specifically identified position) • Upon release women need to attend Centrelink for the JSA (Job Seeker Assessment) to assess their ongoing needs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mt Druitt Family Violence Team <p>Model – Support Organisations / ‘Welfare’ Systems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal-identified position • Clients must reside in Mt Druitt • Central location in Mt Druitt, and close to other support organisations • DV support groups, one specifically for Aboriginal women • Financial support

Other		
Broad Examples	Examples of actual organisations	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited or no Aboriginal staff Not in the geographical region Wide range of services or one specialist service (e.g. legal support) without demonstrated support in other areas Little ability to work intensively Need to make an appointment prior to accessing service Inconsistent history of working with Aboriginal communities Not really 'in-person' based (telephone referral, outreach, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blue Mountains Women's Health Centre <p>Model – Support Organisations / 'Welfare' Systems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Geography biggest issue Reports working with +100 ATSI women in two years
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elizabeth Evatt Community Legal Centre <p>Model – Legal Issues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Geography biggest issue, and depth of 'outreach' is unclear Phone based Legal, court and solicitor support No Aboriginal staff Report interest in working in partnership (e.g. my thought is MOU with intensive support)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Penrith-Mt Druitt Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Scheme <p>Model – Support Organisations / 'Welfare' Systems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No Aboriginal identified positions, but will "second-support" when possible "We are able to see all women experiencing domestic violence who are applying for an ADVO"
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Penrith District Office, Probation & Parole, Community Offender Services, Department of Corrective Services. <p>Model – Correctional Services / Prison Support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No Aboriginal identified positions, but all workers undertake cultural awareness training "Given the low numbers of Aboriginal women on caseload at this Office, we have not delivered culturally specific services to this group" Clients of this Service are Court mandated and are serving a

		<p>community based order. The focus of supervision (case management) is improving community safety by targeting the offender specific criminogenic behaviours by way of various intervention strategies. We also provide pre-sentence Court advice in the form of Pre-Sentence Reports”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The Department of Corrective Services is currently establishing an accommodation and resettlement program for approximately 7 women, both Aboriginal and other, who are subject to the supervision of this Service. The program will operated out of two houses at the front of Emu Plains Correctional Centre and adjoining Bolwara House. The program known as ‘Boronia House” will be overseen by the Area Manager, Penrith Community Offender Services”
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mirang Din Aboriginal Womens Resource Centre Inc. <p>Model – Aboriginal specific organisations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal-run resource centre (two positions only) • Partnership organisation • Has difficulty in maintaining access for women with dependent children (no space / support services for the children)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports some access by women exiting prison to some programs run there, but they often do not stay • Service located in Blakett
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hawkesbury District Health – Counselling & Population Health <p>Model – Support Organisations / ‘Welfare’ Systems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check the geographical region of Windsor and Hawkesbury LGA (I think not close enough) • Counselling, but wait lists etc. • Aboriginal Liaison officer, but they did not report much information that makes them seem directly related • They seem to function like an area health service • I wonder what support around “chronic and complex services”

For Children and Young People

Broad Examples	Examples of actual organisations	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal specific service for children and young people • In the geographical region • Holistic approach to working with families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Penrith City Council – Children Services <p>Model – Support Organisations / ‘Welfare’ Systems OR Broader Communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support agency for organisations that work directly with children • New service • Self-reported unknown in (Aboriginal) communities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mimali <p>Model – Aboriginal specific organisations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports the 2770 region only – Mt Druitt • Family support offered 1-to-1, so can support Aboriginal women with children assessing the service • May prove beneficial for support

		<p>services to all children and young people – side age range</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did not report if staff identified as ATSI • Reports ability to expand familial support
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Appendix 8: Categorisation of workers' interviews

Section	Example(s)
1. Correctional Services / Prison Support	<p>Risks include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the time when women exit prison their experiences are 'acute' – they may be reminded of past experiences, return to undesirable conditions, feel chaotic • Women may break parole conditions if they associate with past partners / family / peers • Continued AOD use within prisons • Moving often within the prison system, destabilisation • Learning "bad habits" in prison • Staff under pressure, high-stress workplaces • Correctional workers at capacity, inability to provide intensive support • One female post-release Aboriginal worker for the state of NSW • Communication within prison breaking down so staff do not necessarily know the same information about clients <p>Protective Factors include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on the structure and routine that is created in prison • Work with women on skills as soon as they enter prison; build skills intensively as release comes closer • Work with women so they undertake their own self-directed (but intensively supported) preparation and goal-setting • Intensive case management support in prison • Transitional centre experience – makes the move to exiting prison more structured (like "stepping stones") • Aim to create positive experiences – i.e. achieving a small goal – building confidence prior to release • With stable accommodation, probation and parole may be able to visit women at their homes after release • Programs for mothers and children within prisons • Structured support services for correction staff
2. Family / Carers / Friends	<p>Risks include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended family that have custody of dependent children then denying access or returning the children to the mother post-release • Domestic violence (DV) with partner that is 'normalised' • Family being located in regional / rural areas (far away) • Cycles of AOD use with family / peers • Cycles of DV with family / peers • Volatile relationships / poor boundaries as 'normalised' • Other family members within the prison system, being in prison as a norm

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexism and men not being accountable for their actions • Families losing contact – such as women entering prison and their families not knowing
	Protective Factors include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family counselling for parents and children • Women knowing places that they can go for a cup of tea – small, incidental supports
3. Culture	Risks include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AOD use as ‘normalised’ and ‘cultural’ norm • Feelings of shame • Histories of trauma • Deaths in custody • Forced removal of children
	Protective Factors include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal support groups (both formal and informal), e.g. Aboriginal women’s AOD support group • Culturally specific organisations and programs
4. Dependent Children	Risks include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitation issues when mothers in prison • Child abuse • Children having not seen their mother when she is in prison • DoCS-ordered restrictions that may not be understood by mother, parents, and family • Women feeling threatened that any ‘mistakes’ will lead to their children being taken away
	Protective Factors include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Re) Learning parenting support skills – intensive programs • Family counselling for the whole family • Kinship placements while mother in prison
5. Self	Risks include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AOD use as ‘normalised’ and ‘cultural’ norm • DV as ‘normalised’ and ‘cultural’ norm – returning to violent partner feels like the only option • Being a single mother without support • Getting pregnant to ‘repair’ relationships, or because of lack of sexual health knowledge • Being lonely, feeling alone and unsupported • Needing to access services – such as chemists, doctors – for scripts, but being unsure how to • Lack of own living skills • Lack of parenting skills • Co-dependency as norm • Lack of confidence • History of sexual assault

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling bored • Histories of trauma • Comorbidity issues • Ongoing health concerns, for example, serious dental issues • Being involved in the correctional system since Juvenile Justice
	Protective Factors include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Re)Learning living skills – like parenting, cooking, self-esteem • Learning how to make choices – feeling like there are options • Having hope • Reduce feelings of chaos in life – especially upon release • Building self-responsibility • Respect
6. Aboriginal Specific Organisations	Risks include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing levels being unable to meet demand • Specialist organisations covering huge geographical distances
	Protective Factors include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women-specific groups • Home visits by supporting organisations
7. Support Organisations / 'Welfare' Systems	Risks include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of being lonely, or feeling “out of place” in refuges • Reluctance to work with organisations that do not have Aboriginal staff
	Protective Factors include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial support, like brokerage, for the small things like having food in the house • Rehabilitations services that provide incentives to participate • Rehabilitation before accessing dependent children • Parenting support services • Intensive support services, including long-term case management •
8. Education / Employment	Risks include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term disengagement from formal education • Negative association with education • Lack of literacy skills • Lack of numeracy skills
	Protective Factors include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience with goal setting • Success with goals

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of structure • Achieving something linked to 'learning' and gaining 'hope' • Sexual health education • Health education • Mental health education • Financial education like budgeting
9. Broader Communities	Risks include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time – without short-term stability women often 'spiral out of control' • Geography – of family, support, children, housing, access to locations • Access to services in different (and far apart) locations • Lack of transport • Stigma against people exiting prison • Racism • Women having "burned their bridges" with support communities
	Protective Factors include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community programs that assist in lessening the stigma of people exiting prison • Local Indigenous communities building support and bridges for the women
10. Legal Issues	Risks include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lodging AVOs that are then breached • Misunderstanding of legal DoCS orders about access to children (may not be until they are 18 years of age)
	Protective Factors include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning and knowing legal rights through specialist advice • Aboriginal solicitors linked to supporting organisations