

Department for Correctional Services

# STRONG FOUNDATIONS & CLEAR PATHWAYS:

Women  
Offender  
Framework and  
Action Plan

**JUNE 2014**  
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## Foreword

In May 2015 the Department for Correctional Services published the Consultation Report: *Phase 1 Women Offender Framework Development Project*. In keeping with the South Australian Government's commitment to opening up projects for public consultation at an earlier stage in the process, the report findings are grounded in having listened directly to the people affected or impacted by women's offending.

Many of the Consultation Report findings challenged status quo ideas and practices and called for a new shared vision for addressing offending by women. Consistently emphasised in the Consultation Report findings was the importance of: 1) acknowledging women's gendered and cultural needs in design of correctional environments, services and practices; 2) designing and

implementing approaches that strengthen the reliability and quality of service pathways to support women's community reintegration; and 3) mandating planning and accountability requirements that reflect women's priorities.

The Strong Foundations and Clear Pathways: *Women Offender Framework and Action Plan* have been developed based on consultation findings and research into effective engagement and intervention with women who offend. While holding women accountable for the crime they commit, the initiative does not shy away from acknowledging the resilience and resourcefulness of women and their ability to focus on a new life pathway for themselves, their families and ultimately in connection to their communities. The initiative sets out practical steps to enable women to access the opportunities, support and resources they may need to make and sustain necessary changes in their lives.

Another explicit intention of the initiative is enabling opportunity for the community as a whole to contribute to building safer South Australian communities. We know that producing quality justice outcomes requires broadening the circles of positive influence in the lives of women offenders including family, cultural and spiritual groups, individuals, business sectors, industries and organisations cascading out to the broader community.

To support implementation of the Strong Foundations & Clear Pathways: *Women Offender Framework and Action Plan* a Ministerial appointed Workgroup will be established. To be comprised of government, business and community sector representatives, the Ministerial Workgroup will provide a mechanism for overcoming obstacles to development and system change as well as open up opportunity for input by a broad range of key interest groups into this important initiative.

Strong links will also be made possible through the Ministerial appointed Workgroup to other Government priority reform areas including Justice Sector Reform, Justice Reinvestment, A Right to Safety - South Australia's Women Safety Strategy 2011-2022, Achieving Women's Equality - SA and other Government strategies and advancements in areas of employment, higher education and skills.

The Department for Correctional Services is entering a new era with the release of the Strong Foundations and Clear Pathways: *Women Offender Framework and Action Plan*. The initiative creates a new benchmark for South Australia. We invite and encourage community, government, support agencies and business partners along with correctional staff to provide input into the advancement of this important initiative.



**Hon Gail Gago**  
Minister for the Status of Women



**Hon Tony Piccolo**  
Minister for Correctional Services

## CE Message



The release of the Strong Foundations & Clear Pathways: *Women Offender Framework and Action Plan* is a milestone for the Department for Correctional Services. The initiative is about laying a strong foundation of rehabilitation opportunity for women offenders and identifying clear pathways to transitional support and community reintegration.

Designed as an enabling initiative, the Strong Foundations & Clear Pathways: *Women Offender Framework and Action Plan* will assist us to build on the significant investment we have already made to enhance our correctional environments and capabilities. Through the initiative we are positioned to increase our capacity to deliver dedicated infrastructure, programs and resources better tailored to women who offend.

The mix of strategies set out in the Strong Foundations & Clear Pathways initiative also highlights the importance of working together with sector partners and through community engagement in leading change.

I welcome the opportunity afforded through the initiative to implement a contemporary, research informed approach to management of women. I thank the people who have collaborated to produce this initiative.

**David Brown**

Chief Executive  
Department for Correctional Services

# PART ONE

## Why a Framework?





# Introduction

Women's offending and reoffending is of concern to the whole community. Enabling restoration or establishment of pro social connections with the community and acquisition of services and resources to support desistance from crime can provide direct benefit to women offenders. Given women's ongoing membership of the community this approach can also benefit community safety.

There is attention being paid globally and in Australia on how to accomplish improvements in correctional management and community reintegration of women who offend. The Strong Foundations & Clear Pathways: *Women Offender Framework and Action Plan* is South Australia's approach to achievement of correctional outcomes and is aimed at improving performance, creating supportive organisational environments and involving as broad a range of stakeholders as possible in addressing the reintegration and desistance from crime challenges faced by women.

The Department has actively engaged with key service stakeholders and community groups about what may need to change to improve outcomes for victims of crime, the community and women offenders in South Australia.

There has been a 79.3 per cent increase in the female daily average prisoner population over the past decade. A decline is evident in the use of community based orders. Aboriginal women remain over represented in both prison and community correctional populations. More needs to be done to ensure effective prison services and the increased utilisation of community based responses to address women's desistance from crime and safe community reintegration.

Analysis of the correctional service system also suggests that while statutory supervision is important to community safety and requires enhancement, longer term community safety is more likely to be achieved when women are afforded opportunity to take responsibility for what they have done and encouragement and support to develop new competencies and capacity to live crime free.

The Strong Foundations & Clear Pathways: *Women Offender Framework and Action Plan* establish a gender and culturally informed approach and work plan to enhance the management, rehabilitation and safe community reintegration of women who offend.



"We welcome the focus on women as a population with distinct needs and experiences that need to form the basis of an effective service response."

**(Government Sector,  
Consultation Response)**

## What informed Framework and Action Plan Development?

The Department invited stakeholders to share their insights and understandings about the correctional service system and women offender needs (Consultation Paper: Improving responses to women offenders and prisoners involved in correctional settings, March 2014).

Victim advocates spoke of the expectations of victims of crime and the importance of ensuring women receive adequate support to rehabilitate and safely reintegrate into the community following correctional involvement.

Government, justice and community sector stakeholders made observations about the current operation of the correctional service system and potential areas for enhancement or change. Specific observations were made about the importance of cross sector communication, information sharing and coordination in achieving better outcomes with women offenders and for victims of crime and ultimately the community.

Correctional staff gave input through the Department's Shaping Corrections consultation mechanism along with making individual and group responses. Shaping Corrections is a key innovation and service improvement initiative and platform for:

- staff consultation and engagement;
- fostering and championing new ways of doing things;
- continuously improving our business systems and practices;
- initiating and supporting sustainable change.

Correctional staff provided significant guidance about the workings of the service system and what may need to be considered when designing future service strategies.

Women offenders and ex-offenders shared insight into their lived experience of the correctional service system and what may need to be considered in areas of practice, service, infrastructure and environmental change. Women also made observations about the types of intervention most effective in bringing about sustainable life changes.

Findings from the consultation along with research and data analysis were incorporated into the Phase 1 Consultation Report (October 2014), Women Offender Framework Development Project, released May 6, 2015. The breadth of ideas and strategies identified during consultation and research phases have been utilised to inform development of the Strong Foundations & Clear Pathways: *Women Offender Framework and Action Plan*. Figure 1 Stronger Foundations & Clear Pathways - At a Glance provides a snapshot of the major elements of the initiative. These elements are addressed in more detail in Part Two of this document.

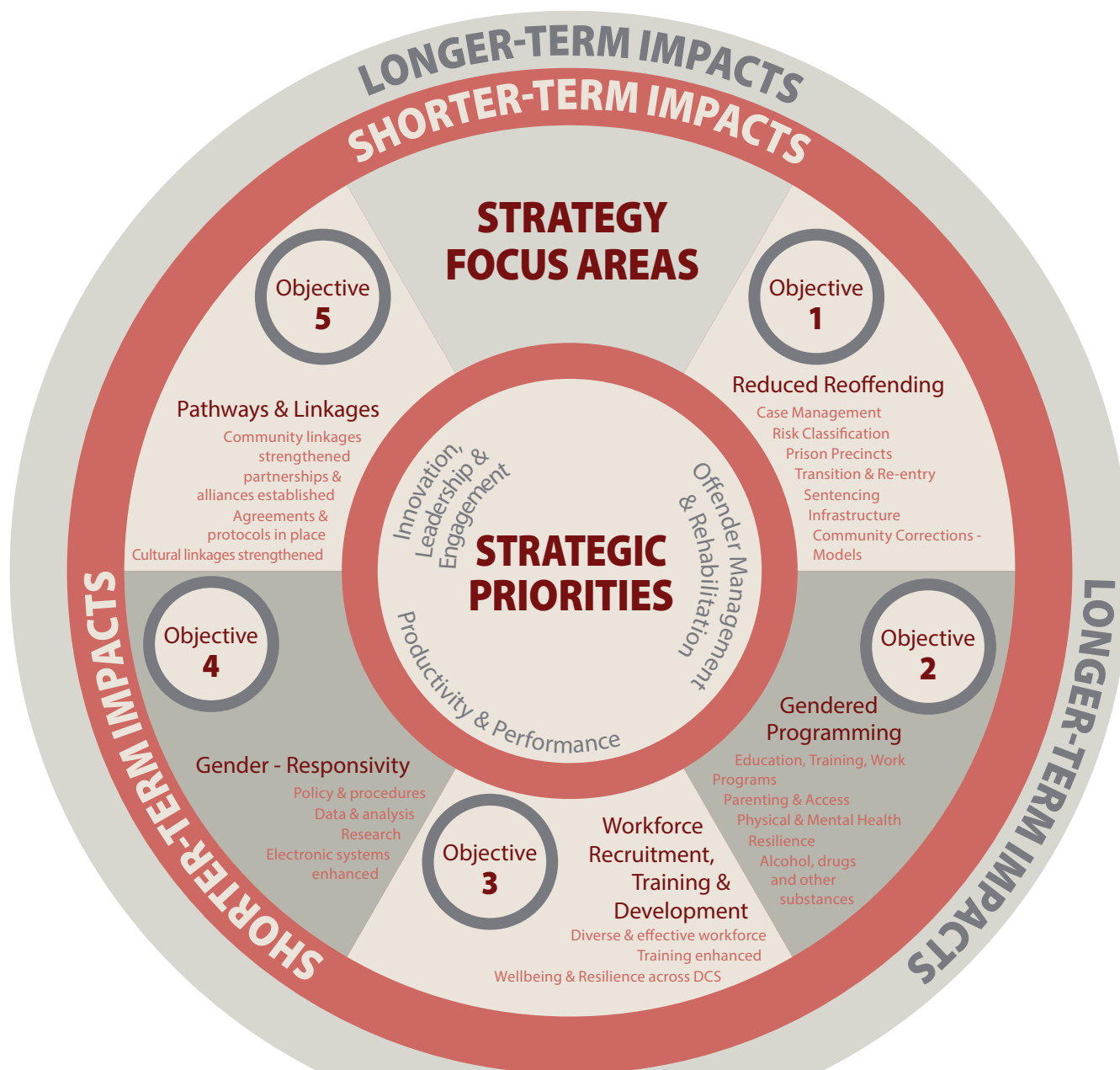


"Victim surveys highlight that victims want... good constructive rehabilitation because they don't want people being released with the same mind set. We need to acknowledge/ be aware of the harm caused by crime but support them (women) from (not) doing it again."

**(Victim Advocate,  
Consultation Response)**



## Strong Foundations & Clear Pathways - At a Glance



### SHORTER-TERM IMPACTS

Enhanced compliance • Reduced reoffending • Trained & supported workforce • Clarity in working with women • Practice Innovation • Increased cultural & community support • Clear pathways to intervention & resources • Coherent interplay between corrections health & social services • Responsive programming • Contemporary infrastructure & practice

### LONGER-TERM IMPACTS

Quality enhanced • Improved methods of working with women • Wellbeing of community enhanced • Stronger more connected communities • Decreased intergenerational offending • Victim confidence increased • Reduced incarceration • Effective correctional services • Safer communities

## Implementation of the Framework

The key to success of the Strong Foundations & Clear Pathways initiative is the requirement for a strategy that not only establishes a consistent approach to implementation but also enables the involvement of people with expertise and commitment to progress change.

### **a) Ministerial appointed Workgroup**

A Ministerial appointed Workgroup formed of key parts of Government, business and community interest groups including victim and offender advocates, is tasked with regular review of progress of the initiative. The Workgroup is particularly required to give consideration to the links being established through the initiative to other reform agendas dealing with justice sector reform, women's safety, women's equity, access to physical and mental health services and employment, higher education and skills development. The Workgroup is well placed not only to generate new opportunity and ideas to advance outcomes for women offenders, victims of crime and the community but also to problem-solve barriers to advancement of the initiative's aims, objectives and strategies.

### **b) Governance Committee**

A Governance Committee is tasked with planning, project management and implementation of the initiative and reporting to the Chief Executive Officer and the Department Executive Leadership Group. The Governance Committee also provides advice to the Ministerial appointed Workgroup on implementation of all projects and project outcomes. The Governance Committee has been purposefully designed to enable the Department, relevant partner agencies and community interest groups to form alliances and partnerships to progress initiative aims, objectives and strategies.

## Commitment to consultation

Literature on change management places significant emphasis on the fact that all change within an organisation or across sector relationships and partnerships is implemented by people. Irrespective of work to progress system design or strategies to improve service outcomes a strategy enabling introduction and management of change through people is essential to the generation of sustainable outcomes.

While formal structures (e.g. Governance Structure) are in place to advance the initiative within the Department and across service pathways it is also important to engage all those with an interest in service reform in dialogue about the work plan objectives and strategies. The consultation mechanism Shaping Corrections along with local area workgroups provide important mechanisms through which organisational change can be discussed and ideas to enhance development explored. Standard industrial consultation processes also form an important process of consultation.

The Department is also committed to consultation and the formation of strong partnerships and alliances with external service and community groups who hold specific interest or investment in progression of particular objectives and strategies. Ongoing consultation and engagement with partners and community interest groups is about ensuring the involvement of people with expertise, experience and innovative thinking particularly during project development and implementation phases.

The understanding and perspectives of women offenders are also important. Women's insight into how changing their lives can best be achieved and what may support and sustain change is particularly important to helping inform correctional environment, service and practice design and enhancement. Consultation will occur with women during certain development and implementation phases of the initiative.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

When monitoring and evaluating outcomes of the Strong Foundations & Clear Pathways: *Women Offender Framework and Action Plan* the Ministerial appointed Workgroup and Governance Committee are tasked with considering a number of important questions to determine whether the initiative is achieving the intended aims, objectives and strategies:

- Are the aims, objectives and strategies having an impact on outcomes for victims of crime, women offenders, the Department/allied sectors and community?
- What has been learned through implementation of the aims, objectives and strategies about improving effectiveness in working with women offenders?
- Are specific populations of women being adequately considered through the initiative's aims, objectives and strategies - Aboriginal women, women with multiple and complex need, women with children, women with cognitive impairment and/or disability?
- What may need to be done to further enhance or strengthen outcomes for victims of crime, women offenders, the Department/allied sectors and community?

The Department is specifically tasked with the development of formal methods for monitoring and reviewing implementation of the initiative and the identification of strategy outcomes.

## Document Format

This document has been designed to enable logical connections to be made about the major elements of the initiative.

Part One, has provided a brief overview of what has informed development of the initiative and briefly overviewed the major elements of the initiative.

Part Two, addresses the two components of the initiative:

- *Women Offender Framework* - establishes the policy direction for the Department for Correctional Services in management and rehabilitation of women offenders in prison and community settings.
- *Action Plan* - commences with the identification of service demand trends and then summarises the Department for Correctional Services three strategic priorities, three aims, five objectives and 22 associated strategies in meeting initiative outcomes. Infrastructure and intended outcomes are also addressed.





# PART TWO

## Framework & Action Plan



## A New Policy Context

The release of the Strong Foundations & Clear Pathways: *Women Offender Framework* provides opportunity to clarify where the Department for Correctional Services (the Department) is headed in operation and service delivery for women under supervision in prison and community correctional settings. Foremost the Strong Foundations & Clear Pathways: *Women Offender Framework* is designed to responsibly deliver on the Department's mission:

"We contribute to public safety through safe and humane management of offenders and the provision of opportunities for rehabilitation and reintegration."

The Strong Foundations & Clear Pathways: *Women Offender Framework* achieves this by establishing a new policy direction for the Department and allied providers in management and service provision to women supervised in prison and community correctional settings.

### Strong Foundations & Clear Pathways: *Women Offender Framework*

#### Policy Statement

Our responses take into account the gender and cultural needs, characteristics and life experiences of women within broader offender management practices and as part of development of infrastructure, environments and service pathways.

#### Operational Principles

- Gender and culture matter.
- Environments, services and practices are responsive to the reality of women's lives and needs.
- Relationships matter.
- Informed by best practice.

### Policy Implications

There are a number of implications that arise from the release of the Strong Foundations & Clear Pathways: *Women Offender Framework* that are of relevance to departmental staff and those contracted to deliver services or who provide services to women under supervision in prison and community correctional settings.

The Strong Foundations & Clear Pathways: *Women Offender Framework* sits within the hierarchy of documents guiding correctional service delivery and practices in South Australia. Operationally all new policies, programs and procedures impacting on women under supervision in prison and community correctional settings are required to be compliant with the new policy direction. This includes the review or amendment to existing policy, procedure and programs.

The Strong Foundations & Clear Pathways: *Women Offender Framework* establishes requirement for a balanced approach to correctional supervision and management of women. Beyond the statutory control of women (compliance management) there is need to ensure that women gain access to support and opportunity to develop a personal plan for a life that is safe, pro-socially connected and crime free.

Three key research-based understandings underpin this policy direction and include:

**Women offender needs often differ to male offender needs.**

The Strong Foundations & Clear Pathways: *Women Offender Framework* assumes the correctional management of women to involve many different considerations from the correctional management of men and as requiring different approaches.

**Effective prison and community processes are central to contributing to community safety.**

The Strong Foundations & Clear Pathways: *Women Offender Framework* places considerable focus on the importance of strengthening practices and building staff capacity and confidence in efficiently and effectively working with women.

**Long term community safety is more likely to be achieved when women are afforded opportunity and encouragement to take responsibility for what they have done and acquire new competencies and capacity to live safely in the community.**

The Strong Foundations & Clear Pathways: *Women Offender Framework* establishes requirement to ensure the delivery of gender and culturally responsive management practices, programming and services to reduce women's re-offending and to enhance the likelihood of their safe community integration.

Operational principles have been identified to assist correctional staff and partner agency thinking about what may need to be considered in practice, environment and service design for women. These operational principles are:

**Gender and culture matter.**

Gender and culture make a difference in women's lives and indicate the need to consider alternative ways of addressing their offending, reoffending and support needs. Given the over representation of Aboriginal women, responsiveness to culture and other individual needs is especially important.

**Environments, services and practices are responsive to the reality of women lives and needs.**

Correctional environments, services and practices need to reflect the reality of women's lives in both design and operation. Services and practices in particular need to enable women to be managed in safe, respectful, non-confrontational and dignified ways.

**Relationships matter.**

Policies, procedures and programs need to reflect and promote the importance of healthy and strong connections between women and their children, family and significant others including cultural/broader community.

**Informed by best practice.**

All the principles underscore the importance of best practice informed approaches that take into account research and theory relevant to women and offending by women.





# The Action Plan

The Strong Foundations & Clear Pathways: *Action Plan* has been purposefully designed to promote and facilitate implementation of the gendered and culturally responsive policy direction established through the *Women Offender Framework* and is a work plan to enhance management of women supervised in prison and community correctional settings.

## Overview of Action Plan Elements

### DCS Strategic Priority 1: Offender Management and Rehabilitation

#### Aim 1: Reduce women's re-offending



Deliver a correctional service for women to reduce re-offending.

Deliver programs to meet the diverse and unique needs of women.

### DCS Strategic Priority 2: Productivity and Performance

#### Aim 2: Gender responsive correctional services



Workforce recruitment, training and development.

Deliver gender responsive correctional policy and planning.

### DCS Strategic Priority 3: Innovation, Leadership and Engagement

#### Aim 3: Strong partnerships and alliances



Establish strong pathways to community and cultural linkage and support.

The three aims, five objectives and 22 associated strategies that are in focus for the five years of the Strong Foundations & Clear Pathways: *Action Plan* are discussed in summary form in the remainder of this document. This section commences with an overview of service demand.

A comprehensive version of the Strong Foundations & Clear Pathways: *Action Plan* can be accessed at [www.corrections.sa.gov.au](http://www.corrections.sa.gov.au)

## Service Demand

Understandings about the profile of women who offend and the trends in their correctional involvement and the context into which those understandings are to be placed, has provided the logic that has shaped the aims, objectives and strategies set out in the Strong Foundations & Clear Pathways: *Action Plan*.

If gender played no role in criminal behaviour and criminal justice processing then more women would be represented in the South Australian criminal justice system.

While women constitute more than half of the South Australian population on average they constitute a significantly smaller number of the total correctional (prison and community corrections) offender population each day. Annually women constitute around 6 per cent of the prison and 20 per cent of the community corrections total numbers (Table 1: South Australian and Correctional Populations).

Despite women constituting a smaller percentage of the correctional population there has been a 79.3 per cent increase in the female daily average prisoner population over the past decade. There has been a decline in the rate of community orders issued by the courts. Today fewer women (and men) are serving community based orders.

Increases in the South Australian prison population (female and male) are in line with similar trends in other Australian and international jurisdictions. A variety of influencing factors have been identified as driving such trends including shifts in public policy, changes to legislation, police and compliance management practices along with changing patterns of crime. Specific factors likely impacting South Australia's female correctional prison and community population trends include:

- An increase in the number of sentenced women who are now serving 2 to 10 years in prison; around 30 percent of the female prison population.
- An increase in the proportion of women who are imprisoned for Offences Against Justice Procedures (breach), one of the top six reasons for women's imprisonment.
- The overall rate of women's reoffending; around a third of women.
- Changes to sentencing including longer sentences and some mandatory sentencing elements.
- Decrease in the use of community disposals.
- A move away from the use of prison as a measure of last resort.

The research literature identifies ranges of factors commonly associated with women's involvement in correctional service settings (prison and community).

The pathways women take into and from the criminal justice system frequently differ to male offender pathways. Women are less likely than men to have extensive criminal histories including juvenile criminal histories. Women make up a smaller proportion of those convicted and sentenced, especially in the higher courts dealing with more serious categories of crime.

Far less women are in prison for serious violence related offences compared to men. While there is some variance in offence categories overall women are less likely than men to engage in offending prior to their first drug use. Worldwide, compared to men, women's drug use tends to be closely associated with acquisitive crime.

Women's offending often commences in the context of relationships including with family members, friends and significant others. In contrast a risk factor associated with some men is the context of organised crime or peer/gang association.

Women involved in correctional settings, especially prison settings, tend to experience high rates of mental illness, behavioural disorders and drug addiction. These factors are commonly associated in the research with women's higher than average rates of experience of past and current trauma and abuse (e.g. child sexual abuse and domestic/family violence).

Many women involved in the justice system live on the margins of society and experience social alienation. Women's socioeconomic disadvantage and status is frequently exacerbated by their relative poorer education, training and work histories, compared to men. Women's high rate of experience of victimisation, mental illness, lifestyle and substance use also exacerbates their experience of social alienation.

Social alienation can have negative physical and mental health impacts on women's lives. Socially alienated women are less likely to access health and community support services in a timely way and may not take up community or neighbourhood opportunities without support and encouragement.

Aboriginal women remain significantly over represented in both prison (around 30 per cent) and community correctional populations (around 22 per cent). Aboriginal women's entry to the criminal justice system also commences at a younger age and ceases at a younger age compared to non Aboriginal women.

Gender and culture are not unrelated issues in the lives of Aboriginal women. Aboriginal women come to the justice

Table 1: South Australian and Correctional Populations



system as women and as Aboriginal people; as victims and as offenders. Issues of racial discrimination, colonisation and breakdown of cultural practices are associated in the literature with many of the problems Aboriginal women experience.

Aboriginal women experience higher rates of victimisation (child abuse, domestic/family violence) than non Aboriginal women and in addition present with higher rates of depression, Post-Traumatic and Anxiety Disorders. Their symptomology across a range of these conditions has been shown to increase during their time in prison. Aboriginal women's post release mortality rates (homicide rates, cirrhosis and liver failure) are also higher compared with the broader Australian population.

Connection and disconnection from others is a central issue in the lives of many justice involved women. Many women have dependent children. Healthy connection to children, family, significant others, culture and community can be of central importance to women's desistance from crime pathways and safe community life. Disconnections and unhealthy connections can conversely contribute to keeping women along a justice system pathway and potentially impact on the rates of intergenerational correctional involvement over time.

While women often share many common experiences and certain characteristics they are not a homogenous group. Women differ in socioeconomic, disability, sexuality, self-identity, ethnicity, cultural and spiritual ways.

Gender matters and holds implication for the design of assessment, policies, practices, service and environmental design both within correctional settings and across service pathways. To achieve sustainable outcomes requires the application of an evidence base which recognises the differences between women and men, and the reality of women's lives.

Service, environment and infrastructure planning also requires focus to be placed on community expectation about what needs to be achieved with women offenders. Of particular importance is knowledge pertinent to women's reasons for offending, type and seriousness of offending and desistance pathways and their experiences of the justice system.

Research indicates that structured, co-ordinated, multi-agency approaches have been found to be effective in responding and marshalling the level of resources required in support of women, especially those with a complexity of need.

An integrated approach to case management that includes role clarification, reinforcement and modelling of pro-social values has been shown to be effective when working with women.

Intervention with women that takes a problem solving and strength-based approach has proved highly effective, especially when focused on building women's skills and self-efficacy, resilience and wellbeing and supporting their reintegration into the community.

Focus is also required on opening opportunity for women to address economic hardship, establish stable accommodation and access to educational or vocational training and employment opportunities as a foundation for their future.





# Department Priorities

The Department for Correctional Services Strategic Plan (2014 -2017) establishes three priorities against which the Strong Foundations & Clear Pathways: *Action Plan* (June 2014 to June 2019) aims, objectives and strategies are aligned:

1. **Offender Management and Rehabilitation**
2. **Productivity and Performance**
3. **Innovation, Leadership and Engagement**

Each of the Department's priorities establishes the context into which the Strong Foundations & Clear Pathways: *Action Plan* aims, objectives and strategies are to be delivered.

## 1

### Offender Management and Rehabilitation

The Department is committed to the operation of prison and community service environments and practices designed to minimise the risk of reoffending and enable coordinated intervention and through-care. In prison settings operation is guided by national standards which address the importance of taking the least restrictive safe and non-threatening approach, based on assessed risk, to maximise opportunity for:

- Community safety.
- Safety and well being of offenders and staff.
- Rehabilitation and resettlement of offenders.

The Department operates the Adelaide Women's Prison and Adelaide Pre Release Centre. High, medium and low security prison accommodation is available to women from these sites.

Women accommodated in low and medium security accommodation are encouraged to develop increased levels of self-responsibility and care and to access programs, education and training and work opportunities. For those women accommodated in high security accommodation, ranges of opportunity is available for participation in offence focused programs, education and recreation activities but these prisoners are subject to a broad range of restrictions on their day to day movements and access to privileges.

In community correctional service settings women are supervised on pre-release, home detention, post-prison and/or community-based orders. Women are managed through 16 community service sites located throughout the State.

The lower number of women in community correctional settings creates particular challenges in meeting women's unique needs although women do have access to a range of supervision and correctional support and assistance to access services in the broader community. The Department is nonetheless committed to further increasing women offenders' engagement in meaningful activities while they are serving community based orders.



"Focus on gender and culturally responsive service models, assessment tools and management practices to support women's desistance from crime and community reintegration".

**(Community Stakeholder,  
Consultation Response)**

## Aim 1: Reduce Women's Reoffending

### Objective 1: Deliver correctional services for women to reduce reoffending

#### Outcomes:

- Rehabilitation services focus on decreasing women's reoffending.
- Women have increased opportunity to make restitution.
- Women's safe reintegration into the community is enhanced.
- Women's safe family, community, cultural and spiritual connections are encouraged and supported.

### Strategies

By enhancing offender management and rehabilitation the Department specifically seeks to address:

- Increasing women's access to programs, education and training.
- Development and promotion of effective ways to increase the use of community sentencing options.
- Improvements to whole of sentence management.
- Provision of rehabilitation and reintegration services to address issues that contribute to reoffending.
- Provision of targeted support and intervention for women with disabilities and complex mental health needs.
- Development of innovative and effective ways to address the specific needs of Aboriginal people.

#### 1.1 Enhance assessment and case management of women in prison and community correctional settings.

Improving whole of sentence management is important to ensuring that women's transition through the correctional service system is well coordinated and that their access to services and programming occurs in a timely and well managed way.

Focus is required on ensuring the assessment and case management approach underpinning whole of sentence management takes into account women's gendered and cultural needs. Emphasis is also required on the offender - worker relationship, women offenders' strengths and protective factors, gender specific factors in determining suitable levels of supervision along with clear linkage to community and capacity building opportunities.

#### 1.2 Develop gender specific security risk classification processes for women in prison.

The lower risk posed by many women along with their distinct needs, characteristics, life and family circumstances requires a security risk classification system responsive to the offence profile, gendered and cultural needs of women. Current risk classification processes, largely based on the security risk profile of male offenders, can act to over classify women and subsequently impact on their timely access to accommodation (types), employment and certain programming and reintegration processes.

#### 1.3 Develop a service model for management of low/medium security risk women in prison settings.

Preparing women for a safe return to the community is a central goal of correctional services. Research emphasises the importance of normalising living environments for women in prison settings to enable them opportunity to develop and try out new knowledge and skills so as to increase their competency for safe living in the community on release. Expansion of the accommodation units available in the Living Skills Precinct Areas will increase opportunities for women. A new service model will further enhance these opportunities by delivering a structured day in which women can access education, training, pre-employment and work opportunities in preparation for safe community re-entry.



#### **1.4 Introduce gender and culturally responsive management practices for women in prison.**

Compared to the male prison population and the broader community women offenders are more likely to present to the correctional system with serious mental health concerns including post-traumatic stress disorder, personality disorder and depression and anxiety disorders. These factors when combined with women's unique needs (for example, pregnant women; women with cultural practice requirements) require the design and operation of management practices (for example, restraint, strip search, personal risk assessment processes) responsive to women's profile and characteristics.

#### **1.5 Strengthen transition and re-entry processes for women offenders.**

Strengthening the existing relationships and methods of planning and case management between prison and community correctional services and correctional services and partner agencies is important to the enhancement of women's transition and community integration. Focus is already being placed on increasing women's access to the Adelaide Pre-release Centre and Home Detention Program. A distinct approach to supporting women's transition and re-entry to the community from these program areas is required.

#### **1.6 Tailor service delivery to meet the needs of women involved in community correctional settings.**

Even though the majority of women supervised by the Department are located in the community less focus has historically been placed on identifying the most effective models of operation and supervision to address women's service needs.

The Department is committed to researching and implementing innovative strategies for the management of women in community correctional settings. The Department will work closely with service partners and community groups to identify innovative strategies and potential models of operation. This will include working with Aboriginal communities to identify culturally relevant approaches.

#### **1.7 Ensure women's access to a range of sentencing options.**

Research and the experience of the Department shows that many women can be effectively managed in the community, particular those who pose a lower security risk.

Working to keep women connected to the community (for example, children and family, education and employment) and providing opportunity for them to make restitution (for example, expanded access to community work/restitution) is important to creating better outcomes for women and ultimately victims of crime and the community.

The Department will work with justice sector partners to engage with the community about the potential long term benefits that can be gained from the use of better sentencing options particularly for lower risk women.



## Aim 1: Reduce Women's Reoffending

### Objective 2: Deliver programs to meet the diverse needs of women.

#### Outcomes:

- Increased gender responsive programming.
- Rehabilitation services focus on decreasing women's reoffending.
- Coherent interplay between corrections, health and social services.
- Women's safe reintegration into the community is enhanced.
- Women's safe family, community and cultural connections are encouraged and supported.

### Strategies

A combination of domestic/family and sexual violence, physical and mental health, education, training, justice, cultural based, housing, income support and counselling services are needed to support women's long term desistance from crime and safe community reintegration.

#### 2.1 Expand education, training and work opportunities.

The Department has developed an Education and Training for Prisoners and Offenders Strategic Plan 2014-2017. Through the plan opportunity is created to work with education, higher education and training sectors, partner agencies and business sectors to expand opportunities for women.

Training and preparation for workforce participation is especially important for justice involved women. Many women enter correctional settings with more limited workforce experience than males. Women can face pressures (for example, child care needs) and blocks to employment (e.g. ex-offender status) especially on release from prison. Social security thresholds have also changed with greater emphasis now placed on workforce participation by women.

Prison industry with vocational training and linkage to employment opportunities both during and on transition from prison is important to building women's future prospects, as is access to higher education opportunities for some women. In community settings pathways to education, training and work remains a focus.

#### 2.2 Develop gender and culturally responsive programs for women to reduce reoffending.

Increasing women's access to gendered and culturally responsive offence focused programming is important. The Department is committed to enabling access to programming that addresses offending in the context of many of the interrelated issues in women's lives including drug and alcohol misuse, mental illness, past victimisation and self-esteem.

#### 2.3 Increase and support women's access to their children.

A small number of women enter prison settings while pregnant and many more women retain parental responsibility throughout the time of their imprisonment. Increasing women's safe and sustainable access to their children both in prison settings and during phases of transition back to the community is important to achieve.

The Department recognises the significant attachment an infant/child has with its mother and how this informs the child's emotional, physical and psychological development and wellbeing. The Department will work proactively with sector partners to support and enable parenting by women especially those located in prison settings. The Department is committed to ensuring decisions made about contact and residential visitation with a mother/carer is based on the best interest of the child.

#### 2.4 Improve the health and wellbeing of women in prison.

Women in prison often present to the correctional service system with pre-existing health and wellbeing needs. On a range of indices justice involved women have high prevalence rates of drug use, infectious diseases, severe psycho-social



distress and mental health issues. Their mortality rates post release is higher than for the broader community, especially so for Aboriginal women. Women's hospitalisation rates in the community have also been found to be high.

Women tend to access primary health and mental health services on a more consistent basis while in prison. Significant opportunity therefore exists to ensure well-coordinated preventative (for example, health screening, health information), wellbeing (for example, diet, exercise, self-esteem) and treatment services (for example, chronic and acute physical and mental health) to improve health outcomes for women.

Breaking down communication barriers between the varied agencies tasked with aspects of the care of women in prison settings and facilitating appropriate sharing of information is essential. So too is strengthening the protocols for co-working and coordination of physical and mental health activities including 24 hour in patient care. Strengthening transitional planning to enable women's linkage to community based health care services on release is also a key focus area.

Resilience theory has been increasingly used to explore the concept of recidivism and provides a positive means through which to assist women build internal and external resilience resources, self-awareness, self-regulation, optimism, a habit of gratitude and mindfulness among other skills. The Department is committed to exploring the utility of resiliency theory in working with women in prison and community correctional settings.

Building women's wellbeing especially in terms of physical activity, good sleep and nutrition is also an important consideration. Wellbeing in the prison context is also

about a range of very practical issues. It is about ensuring women have access to appropriate clothing, footwear and hygiene products along with ensuring they have access to a privilege system equitable to that applied to the male prison population.

## 2.5 Develop and implement a drug, alcohol and other substance strategy.

The link between women's criminality and drug taking has been found to be strong. A comprehensive and coordinated approach is required to support women to reduce drug, alcohol and other substance use. Increasing support and ensuring a coordinated approach to enable women's access to treatment including self-help options, is a priority focus area of the Action Plan.

Strengthening security and drug detection in prison settings is also important to ensuring safe environments for both substance and non-substance using women and staff.



"Greater focus on work readiness is required including pathways to employment, and education - how to write a CV etc. Needs specialist approach designed for prisoners and ex-offenders. Discussion about what being an offender means re employment access".

**(Female Offender Community, Consultation Response)**

## 2

## Productivity and Performance

Efficiency and fairness are central goals of the South Australian criminal justice system. For the Department efficiency particularly requires applying available resources (human and financial) to accomplish statutory goals. Effectiveness is about delivery of correctional services with particular regard for equity, proportionality, legal protections afforded to accused persons and convicted offenders and community safety.

The small number of women involved in correctional service settings (prison and community) in comparison to men poses both challenge and opportunity in respect to the generation of productivity and performance outcomes. A challenge is to deliver correctional services in equitable ways to address the correctional needs of women when they constitute around 6 per cent of prison and 20 per cent of community correctional populations. Opportunity arises to generate improved outcomes by taking action to ensure operation of gendered and culturally responsive management practices.

Building momentum requires a workforce not only confident and clear about the objectives to be achieved but supported to bring their considerable skills and attributes to achieving outcomes.

### Aim 2: Gender Responsive Management

#### Objective 3: Workforce recruitment, training and development.

##### Outcomes:

- Increased diversity and competency across the workforce.
- Increased knowledge and skills in working with women.
- Collective wellbeing and resilience across the Department.

#### Strategies

A diversity of well trained and supported staff will make a sound contribution to achievement of the strategic priorities of the Department in rehabilitation and resettlement of women.

#### 3.1 Recruit, develop and retain a diverse and effective workforce.

Correctional staff play a central role in the management and rehabilitation of women offenders. Recruitment and retention of a workforce with gender and cultural competency and skills and experience to promote positive interactions with women is a priority for the Department. Continued focus will be placed on recruitment of a diversity of correctional staff to prison and community correctional settings.

#### 3.2 Implement gender specific training and in-service.

Preparing prison and community correctional staff to understand their role with women requires training that addresses gender and cultural specific areas such as,

- Gender and cultural diversity;
- Stereotyping;
- Communication;
- Dependency;
- Abuse impact;
- Effects of the incarceration experience on women;
- Coping behaviours of women;
- Professional interaction strategies;
- Modesty;
- Privacy; and
- Significance of the extended family.

The use of online and face to face training modalities will be explored to ensure a variety of opportunity for training and development.



### 3.3 Build individual and collective wellbeing and resilience across DCS.

Building individual and collective wellbeing and resilience across the Department will contribute to achievement of the agency's three key priorities. Evidence shows a link between a more productive, innovative and engaged workforce and resilience. Taking this approach also creates synergy with the wellbeing and resilience approach being adopted in working with women under supervision in prison and community correctional settings.

## Aim 2: Gender Responsive Management

### Objective 4: Gender responsive correctional policy and planning.

#### Outcomes:

- Staff have increased opportunity and clarity in working with women offenders.
- Increased workforce capabilities and capacity through practice, service and electronic recording system development.

### Strategies

Evidence based policy, processes and planning will contribute to development of a contemporary approach to management of women in prison and community settings.

#### 4.1 Enhance policy and procedures to ensure women's needs are identified and addressed.

Policy and procedural changes are important to enabling the implementation of gender and culturally responsive strategies, supervision and management approaches for women under supervision in prison and community correctional settings.

#### 4.2 Enhance data sets, data extraction and analysis capacity.

Strengthening the capacity of the Department and allied sectors to understand the profile and characteristics of women in prison and community correctional settings is important to resource allocation, review and evaluation of the impact of service operation and outcomes for victims of crime, the Department/allied sectors and the community.

#### 4.3 Enhance research capacity.

Correctional theories relevant to women along with the identification of emerging issues, trends and areas of opportunity is important to helping inform current and future Department and allied sector investment and the delivery of gender responsive services. The Department will work closely with the university sector and cross sector agencies to increase the knowledge base about women offenders and their service needs.

#### 4.4 Enhance the electronic case management system.

Ensuring that women's profile and unique circumstances are fully reflected in electronic case management record systems and associated data fields is important to not only understanding women's needs but also case management, service planning and resource allocation.

# 3

## Innovation, Leadership and Engagement

The Department is proud of its partnering activities with a range of government and non-government organisation, business, research and tertiary institutions and third sector communities.

The agency is committed to:

- Improving the way we communicate and engage with strategic partners.
- Facilitating our ability to understand and respond to stakeholder concerns and interests and incorporate them into our reintegrative activities and decision making processes.
- Building greater cohesion with our stakeholder partners to deliver effective and innovative reintegration pathways.
- Identifying and exploring opportunities to engage new strategic partners.
- Promoting the achievement of effective reintegration pathways for prisoners and offenders.

Through the Strong Foundations & Clear Pathways work plan the Department is examining how not only the agency but also key partners can function better together to meet the needs of women offenders.

### Aim 3: Strong partnerships and alliances

**Objective 5:**  
Establish strong pathways to community and cultural linkage and support.

#### Outcomes:

- Positive relationships maintained with children, families and communities.
- Women's reintegration needs addressed through practice innovation.
- Clear pathways to transition and post release supports.

#### Strategies

Strategies that directly involve community, cultural and spiritual support systems hold potential to not only impact on women's re-offense rates but also enable sustainable pathways for women back to the community.

Inter and intra organisational approaches that are well targeted and coordinated are more likely to optimise the flow of work and information between agencies and to facilitate the most effective and appropriate use of often scant cross sector resources.

#### 5.1 Establish strong pathways to community, cultural and spiritual support and linkage.

The extent to which 'ex - offenders can reintegrate themselves and communities can reintegrate ex-offenders' (McNeill, 2006) is central to changing outcomes for all offenders. Broadening the circles of positive influence in women's lives including family, cultural and spiritual groups, individuals, business sectors, industries and organisations cascading out to the broader community is key to building safer South Australian communities.

#### 5.2 Develop and maintain formal relationships with Aboriginal communities.

Maintaining existing formal links and increasing effective engagement and communication with Elders throughout South Australia's dispersed communities is important to facilitating cultural and community connection for Aboriginal women in prison and community correctional settings.

Strengthening cultural competency within organisational practice is especially important to achieving environments, services and practice more conducive to Aboriginal women's rehabilitation and community reintegration.



“DCS cannot do this important work alone Practice must be informed by collaborative approaches with key partners; sharing responsibility for common clients (particularly those with complex need) is essential to sustainable improvements in areas of greatest vulnerability and risk.”

**(Government Sector Stakeholder,  
Consultation Response)**

### 5.3 Strengthen cross agency agreements and protocols.

A whole of government and community response is required to progress outcomes for women under supervision in prison and community correctional settings. Focus is required on improving the way criminal justice, government and community sectors work together to ensure better information exchange and models of operation. In addition ensuring existing, and as required new cross agency memorandums, agreement and protocols to support better integrated service delivery is also a key focus.

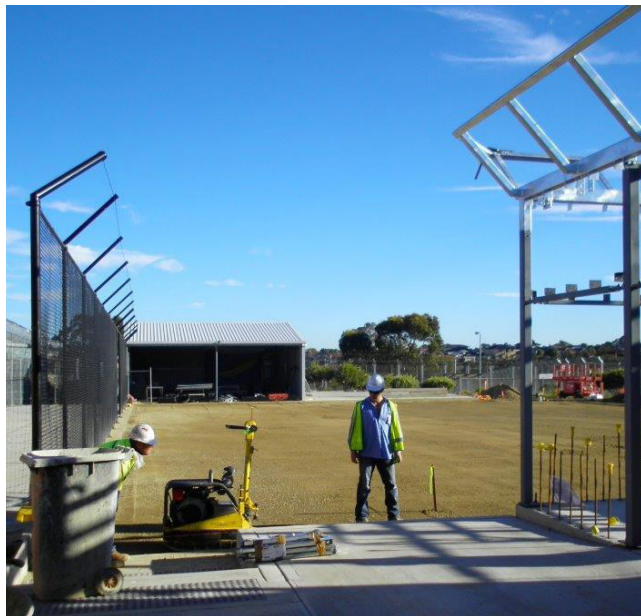
Women require strong pathways to education, training and employment. Active engagement with sector partners will occur to ensure development of cross sector, industry based and higher education agreements and strategies to increase education, training and employment opportunities for women.

Women also require integrated, developmental and culturally appropriate services that address substance use, trauma, physical and mental health concerns, housing, education and employment and other needs long after their correctional involvement.

Building and strengthening alliances with government, community and third sector communities will over time create a platform for innovation, service expansion and reform.

# Infrastructure Development

Infrastructure development is closely aligned to achieving reductions in women's reoffending. Ensuring fit for purpose correctional facilities is about enabling operation of contemporary practices and rehabilitation opportunities for women.



The design of prison facilities is important to enabling contemporary security practices in protection of the community along with provision of accommodation, education, and programming and employment environments to aid the rehabilitation of women. Similarly community based service environments need to be designed to maximise women's access to a variety of support and intervention opportunities.

The Department has already taken action to progress a range of infrastructure developments in parallel to undertaking consultation and research into the development of the Strong Foundations & Clear Pathways: *Women Offender Framework and Action Plan*. Many new infrastructure developments and upgrades have already been completed. Further developments have commenced or are planned for the future. Prior to these new developments it has been 20 years since any major focus has been placed on the facility and environment requirements in prison and community correctional settings.

A new high security unit has been constructed and commissioned (August 2014), at the Adelaide Women's Prison. The Opal Unit provides safe and secure accommodation for women offenders with complex needs and those requiring intensive supervision for a period of time before transition through to main prison precincts.

To support women's access to education, training and programming, a new programs space has been constructed at the Adelaide Women's Prison and further work is underway to relocate a transportable building to further increase available space.

Two cottages have been relocated to the Living Skills precinct at the Adelaide Women's Prison and upgraded to increase available space for women to live independently and self-care. In addition 24 beds have been made available for women at the Adelaide Pre Release Centre. Home Detention has also been expanded to support the transition of women from the Pre-release Centre to the community.

To improve and foster women's contact with their family and children a new visits space has been constructed and commissioned (April 2015) and a new children's playground constructed and operationalised (August 2015).

Significant landscaping has been undertaken including the development of vegetable gardens in the Living Skills precinct at the Adelaide Women's Prison. Women prisoners have contributed, and continue to contribute, to these horticultural activities. Development of an Aboriginal cultural space is planned for the Adelaide Women's Prison.

A high percentage of women enter prison unemployed and with limited employment history. A new commercial kitchen has been built (October 2014) and a Greyhound Adoption Program shed and dog run constructed (November 2014) to expand employment and industry based training opportunity for women offenders.

Work is in progress to design and commission new bail accommodation. The accommodation needs of women forms part of this planning.

A business case and concept design model has been developed to redesign the Women's Centre (dormitories) at the Adelaide Women's Prison.

Exploration is planned into a new operational to support eligible women having their children stay with them for periods of time while they serve their prison sentence.





