



Government of South Australia
Department for Correctional Services



Research and Evaluation Agenda 2019 – 2022

A catalyst for change

Acknowledgement of Country

The State Government would like to preface this report with an acknowledgement of country.

The State Government acknowledges the Kaurna people as the custodians of the Adelaide region and that their cultural and heritage beliefs are still as important to the living Kaurna people today.

The State Government would also like to pay respects to the cultural authority of Aboriginal people from other areas of South Australia and Australia who have contributed to the development of the Report and who will be involved in, or impacted by, the ongoing delivery of its recommendations.

Foreword

I am pleased to introduce the South Australian Department for Correctional Services (DCS) Research and Evaluation Agenda 2019-2022.

This document builds on the Department's Research and Evaluation Agenda 2015-17, which prioritised three key themes; managing and rehabilitating offenders, productivity and performance and innovation, leadership and engagement.

Research and evaluation activity commenced and/or completed over the course of the previous agenda included:

A Future Beyond the Walls: Improving post prison release employment outcomes (UNSW);

- Conceptualising Effective Offender Supervision Practices from the perspective of Community Correction Officers (Woldgabreal/Deakin University);
- Understanding and Preventing Gun Violence. Qualitative study looking at illegal gun possession and use in the Australian context and examine links to other crime activities (Flinders University);
- Conceptualising Effective Offender Supervision Practices from the perspective of Community Correction Officers (Deakin University/DCS staff PHD);
- Building wellbeing and resilience across the Department for Correctional Services (SAHMRI/DCS partnership);
- An investigation into options for an alternative community based order (DCS);
- An evaluation of Home Detention in South Australia (UNSW Social Policy Research Centre); and
- An evaluation of The Arches: A bail accommodation support program (Community Matters).

As at March 2019, the Department had 28 active research initiatives and four formal evaluations were underway across SA prisons and in community corrections that involve partnerships with local and national researchers and institutions.

This updated Research and Evaluation Agenda seeks to support the Department's [2018–2022 Strategic Plan](#) and key business priorities with the goal of ultimately delivering safer communities and reducing reoffending. Current key reform initiatives include DCS's 10by20 Strategy, Smokefree Prisons Strategy and Better Prisons Program.

The [10by20 Strategy](#) launched with bipartisan Government support in 2016, aims to reduce reoffending 10% by the year 2020. The strategy is guided by six identified strategic directions, so that resources can be directed to the areas of the prison population and correctional services system that need it the most and where significant benefits can be achieved. Additionally, the strategy aims to support prisoners and offenders to be successfully engaged in meaningful work or activities, which will be beneficial on an individual level, as well as for members of the wider community.

In early 2018, the Government recognised the unique challenges facing the corrections system that include a complex operating environment exacerbated by the growth in prisoner numbers and particular offender cohorts, ageing and inflexible infrastructure, the high cost of prison services and the ability of DCS to provide programs and services that meet demand and address rehabilitation needs. The Better Prisons Program seeks to reduce reoffending by improving the quality, safety and efficiency of our prison system.

I invite you to review our new Research and Evaluation Agenda and welcome contributions to help South Australia's Correctional Services achieve its strategic and operational goals.

David Brown

Chief Executive

Department for Correctional Services

South Australia

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Introduction

Trends and challenges for SA Correctional Services

There are various emerging themes, trends and challenges facing South Australia's correctional system that are reflected both nationally and internationally.

Among these are (Guiding Principles for Corrections in Australia, 2018):

- an increase in the numbers of prisoners/offenders supervised in both community and custody;
- the continued overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within the criminal justice system;
- the management of radicalised and violent extremist prisoners/offenders;
- a greater attention on reducing domestic and family violence;
- the specific needs of particular prisoner cohorts including; young adult offenders, women, aged and frail, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex (LGBTQI) offenders, those with mental health issues and/or disabilities, and remand prisoners;
- the impacts of social conditions (such as housing, health, education, employment);
- post sentence supervision and detention orders;
- bail reviews and legislative reforms;
- the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT);
- technological changes and innovation; and
- the growth of contracted services (including private providers, non-government organisation and in-house contracted providers) in community corrections and prisons to deliver both traditional corrections services as well as address ongoing system gaps i.e. housing, drug and alcohol services, employment transition etc.

South Australia has experienced dramatic growth in its prison numbers since 2004. Over the past 10 years, the prisoner population has grown by 63.6% with South Australia's nine prisons experiencing a 1.9% growth in its prison population from 2016-17 (2998 daily average) to 2017-18 (3055).

National trends show a consistent increase in prison numbers across jurisdictions, from a rate of 147.2 in 2002–03 to 216 to 221 prisoners per 100,000 adult population in 2017–18 (Australian Bureau of Statistics). However, since 30 June 2017, the adult prisoner population increased across all states and territories with the exception of South Australia, which has decreased by 1% (41 prisoners) which could potentially be attributed the SA Government's commitment to reforms aimed at a 10% reduction in reoffending by 2020 – a target set by the *Reducing Reoffending: 10% by 2020 (10by20)* Strategy.

The continued high incarceration rate and ongoing levels of reoffending demonstrate a clear need to implement more holistic responses that enable offenders to reintegrate and live crime free lives when they return to the community. The cost of imprisoning people and the need for new or expanded prison facilities also highlights the importance of finding alternative and innovative ways to address and reduce reoffending. This reality demonstrates a need for sustainable and long-term solutions to the issues of punishment, deterrence, crime reduction, community safety and offender rehabilitation and transition back to community.

The Department endeavours to pursue research and evaluation in ways that can inform and support policy development, program and service design and effective decision making. Internal and external stakeholders have been engaged in reviewing and revisiting the Department's research and evaluation (R&E) agenda to best position it to meet the Department's ongoing priorities and pressures as well as address emerging trends and align the organisation with the evidence and best practice.

By taking an applied research approach this focuses our research and evaluation (R&E) on areas that are targeted to improving service provision and outcomes of prisoners and offenders and importantly safety outcomes for the community.

In preparing this Agenda, the Department reviewed its progress against the previous agenda, consulted with staff and engaged a wide number of stakeholders via a survey, Think Tank workshop, staff forums and meetings with key departmental stakeholders including the Chief Executive, Executive Directors and senior managers.

Three key themes emerged from these consultations, a system-wide environmental scan, literature review, and reference to key DCS documents i.e. the current Strategic Plan, 10by20 Strategy etc.:

1. Offender management and rehabilitation;
2. People, productivity and performance;
3. Innovation, Leadership and Engagement.

As with the previous Research Agenda 2015-17, this document is time-bound and sets out the R&E priorities for the department over the next three years.

While it is envisaged that elements of this R&E Agenda will be progressed internally or commissioned more formally, some research may be initiated by external investigators and universities or through partnerships with the Department. The Department also encourages mixed method approaches that integrate both quantitative and qualitative data as a way of enhancing and validating findings and to promote deeper understanding and different perspectives. The Department also welcomes the framing of R&E within theoretical frameworks (i.e. realist, developmental, participatory etc.) that reflect the cohort, context, and purpose (questions asked) of the investigation.

We are interested in forming partnerships with research institutions, our colleagues across the South Australian criminal justice sector and other government agencies interested in advancing the R&E evidence base across prioritised themes and identified needs.

If you are interested in conducting research in a complementary area, or if you have research questions not covered by the Agenda but fit broadly under these themes, please contact us to seek support for your proposal.

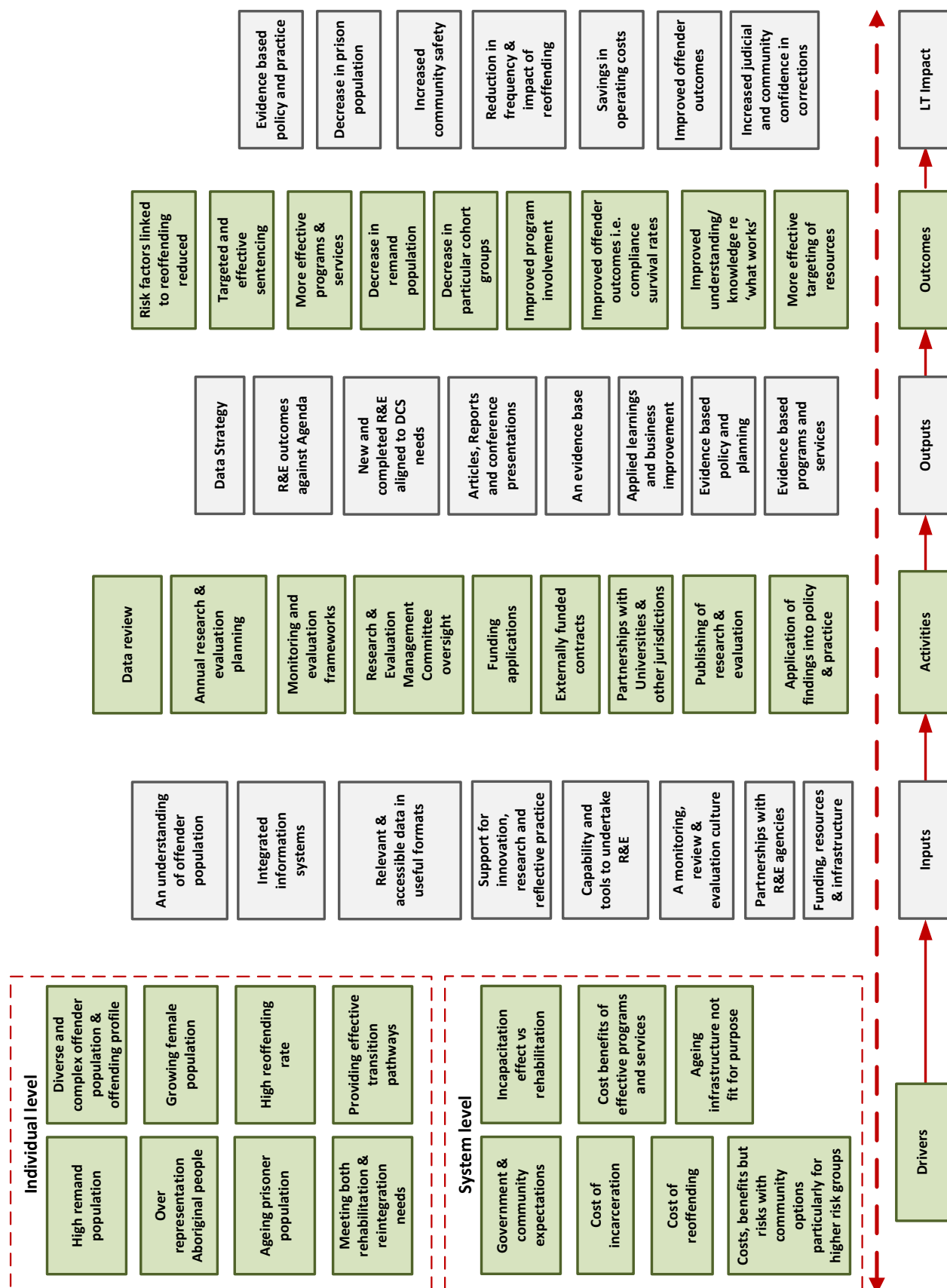
For more information regarding the agenda and application processes contact **Strategic Policy, Projects and Partnerships** on Ph: 08 8226 9139 or Email: DCSResearch@sa.gov.au

DCS's Research and Evaluation Priorities

Tier 1: <i>Key Priorities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Linked to the DCS Strategic and Business Plans• Current DCS reform agenda;<ul style="list-style-type: none">◇ SA Government 2018 Commitments◇ Better Prisons Program◇ 10 by 20 Reducing Reoffending◇ Smokefree Strategy• Infrastructure planning and development
Tier 2: <i>Other Research and Evaluation areas of Interest</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Managing and rehabilitating Offenders• People, productivity and Performance• Innovation, leadership and engagement

2019 – 2022 Research and Evaluation Agenda: Program Logic

A 'program logic model' or 'theory of change' provides a theoretical framework for the positioning of DCS's research and evaluation activity. Its purpose is to articulate the underlying beliefs and assumptions that guide Corrections agenda and inputs and activities for change and longer term outcomes and impact.



Theme 1: Offender Management and Rehabilitation

A primary aim of the Department is to provide effective rehabilitation and reintegration for offenders.

Staff consultation and analysis of trends across the criminal justice sector identified a range of themes emerging as priorities for corrections.

Themes from consultation:

- How effective are our offender rehabilitation programs, policy and practices;
- Longitudinal impact and cost benefit analysis of rehabilitation investment;
- Effective approaches for those on remand or short-term sentences;
- Effective cultural and gender responsive approaches – strategies to stem growth;
- Re thinking post-release reintegration and ‘success’;
- New legislative options – what works best and for whom;
- Impact of structured day, prison industries, employment programs on offender outcomes;
- Managing complex prisoner populations – what works, new and innovative approaches;
- Working with non-government organisations – optimising partnerships and building capacity;
- Developing a deeper understanding of domestic family violence and intervention dynamics for men - strategies to interrupt violence, developing culturally responsive interventions;
- Strategies for managing radicalised and violent extremist prisoners/offenders;
- Countering extremism – designing, implementing and evaluating responses;
- Impact of creative industries, art based activity, social enterprises, etc. on rehabilitation and reducing reoffending;
- Community corrections supervision – effective responses with high risk offenders on intensive supervision, structured day, value of brief interventions, supporting those with drug and alcohol issues, effective practices that reduce breaches and further offending; and
- Innovative and emerging alternatives to custody.

This theme is concerned with increasing our understanding of offenders, effective rehabilitation responses, case management and offender supervision and sentencing and offender management strategies.

Offender management and rehabilitation are central to the role of correctional services and significant resources are invested in the development and delivery of rehabilitation oriented policies and programs. This investment needs to occur within a context of evidence that demonstrates that programs and services are likely to have a greater impact on recidivism than imprisonment alone.

South Australia has sought to respond to its system challenges and emerging issues/ trends across community and custody by seeking a better understanding of its:

- *Offender population* - different demographic and offender-specific characteristics including cross-cutting issues such as drug and alcohol issues, mental health and personal capability.
- *Programs and service delivery* – theories, models, practices and scope of programs that together might contribute to reducing offending and promoting alternative pathways away from crime.
- *Case management and offender supervision* – approaches to, structures and the practices of effective offender supervision, motivation and behaviour change strategies encompassing community, social, cultural and individual contexts and consideration given to the process and obstacles to change and a prosocial lifestyle.
- *Sentencing and offender management strategies* that optimise sentencing outcomes.

R&E activity commenced under the previous agenda needs to continue, however areas of ongoing and emerging interest /need requiring further investigation and evaluation include:

- Effective responses for high-risk, high impact offenders on return to community
- Effective strategies for reducing Aboriginal women's growing incarceration rates.
- Innovative and effective approaches, models and practices to support and manage offenders with complex and comorbid needs on remand or sentenced.
- Affecting behaviour and attitudinal change in domestic family violence perpetrators – is what we do working?
- Implementing 'best practice' end to end case management – moving to an individualised, holistic and integrated model. Reducing high female remand rates through a gendered approach to sentencing.
- Best practice models and strategies for managing offenders on parole, extended supervision orders, home detention and other intensive community based orders.
- Effective strategies and responses for women's post-release reintegration and longer term reintegration without reoffending.
- Evaluation of structured day implementation at Port Lincoln Prison
- Evaluation of the Aboriginal Preparatory and Wellness Program Our Way: My Choice
- Effective strategies and responses to reduce the high proportion of Aboriginal people in the corrections system – options when existing programs are unsuitable due to language and culture issues, low cognitive functioning, acquired brain injury, foetal alcohol syndrome, combined with other factors such as mental health and drug and alcohol use (particularly methamphetamines).
- Is a 'Community Transition and Learning Centre' an effective response to supporting transition of Aboriginal people back to the community – who does it work for, how and in what circumstances?
- Sustainable housing and accommodation models that support offender reintegration and reduced recidivism.
- Drug use in the prisoner population – prevalence, nature and context and effective treatment pathways.
- The effectiveness of 'bail accommodation support services' in reducing remand numbers, sentencing outcomes and future reoffending – who does it work for, how and in what circumstances?
- Therapeutic communities and other innovative and alternative approaches to prisoner management and rehabilitation. Reducing reoffending through facility design, space utilisation and new technologies.
- Strategies and models to support successful reintegration of prisoners back to community.
- Reducing the cost impacts of the correctional system and the economic impact of reoffending while analysing the cost benefits of current programs and services.

Theme 2: People, Productivity and Performance

Jurisdictions are managing an increased demand for technology based solutions such as cloud base technologies, GPS, radio frequency and connected devices allowing electronic monitoring.

In 2017, 365 offenders successfully completed their home detention orders. Changes to the *Correctional Services Act 1982* in September 2016 in South Australia have resulted in a greater number of offenders serving more intensive orders in community.

38 per cent of the Corrections workforce is aged 50 or over, with an average age of 45 years (compared to 40.8 years for all occupations).

A number of critical skills for Corrections have been identified to cater to the changing nature of the prisoner population. These skills include mental health, security, case management, cultural competence and organisational.

Themes from consultation:

- Building a flexible and diverse workforce to meet the changing and complex demands of our system;
- Strategies to support a sustainable, effective and efficient corrections system that achieves statutory and rehabilitation outcomes;
- Future training needs for Correctional Officers to prepare them for an increasingly complex future and ensuring skills, training and qualifications meet these changing and increasing demands;
- Investigating the effects of constant reform change, growing prisoner numbers and an increasingly complex prisoner population on staff health and wellbeing;
- Building a professional workforce able to meet the sometimes competing demands of safety, security, rehabilitation and reintegration;
- The emerging role and opportunities offered by technology and artificial intelligence;
- Identifying emerging trends in safety and security;
- Responding to extremism;
- Opportunity of new technologies; and
- Impacts of the built prison environment on rehabilitation and security and prisoner management.

This theme is concerned with the Department's capacity and capability to manage within an evolving and increasingly complex environment. It covers areas regarded as necessary when building organisational effectiveness and sustainability and includes; workforce planning and development, system and process development, resource allocation, infrastructure development and organisational culture.

Further, the identification of key constraints in building productivity and improving performance is needed to achieve significant gains in improving quality, effectiveness and efficiency across corrections – community and custodial. This theme aims to explore potential gaps in an effort to improve system efficiency through evidence based strategies.

Potential areas for investigation include:

Workforce Planning and Development

- Building sustainable systems to meet current challenges and future business needs;
- Effective learning and development models to meet individual and organisational training needs;
- Improving the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of our prison system – strategies to promote accountability, cost effectiveness, monitoring and system performance and improvement;
- How does DCS build, support and promote a flexible and diverse workforce;
- Developing future leadership and capability, succession planning, and transitioning an aging workforce;
- Become an employer of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Training – Professional development

- Strategies to improve access to and completion of mandatory training and responses to prisoners and offenders at risk of suicide and self-harm;
- Developing new approaches to our work practices - higher-order skills in communication, critical thinking, and problem solving - managing people with complex needs;
- Training for Correctional Officers and Community Corrections staff that emphasise individualised case planning with increasingly complex populations under increased workload;
- The changing role of correctional officers - ensuring training meets the increasing demands of the Corrections industry will be vital to address the changing skill requirements.

Technology

- Streamlining supervision processes and services to enable offender self-service and self-reliance;
- Investigate opportunities for artificial intelligence in a correctional environment;
- Applying new technologies to our services and practices i.e. virtual rehabilitation, use of self-service technology etc. with consideration to benefits, challenges but also limitations;
- Delivery of education through safe internet usage;
- Electronic monitoring and GPS - smart phone technology for monitoring offenders, data management technology - mobile jamming - alternative methods of monitoring people, to reduce the prison population and the costs of imprisonment.

Safety, Security and Infrastructure

- Management of radicalised and violent extremist prisoners and offenders;
- Emerging trends in safety and security within the prison environment;
- Facility design and new technology - preventive justice and pre-emptive criminalisation and punishment (including counter-terrorism measures) - protective security threats;
- Infrastructure as a tool for rehabilitation and the message correctional facilities convey.

Theme 3: Innovation, Leadership and Engagement

This theme is concerned with new and innovative ways of thinking, working and partnering that might support the department to better tackle emerging and existing challenges i.e. declining resources, rise in numbers of domestic family violence perpetrators, growth in remand, Aboriginal and female populations, increasingly diverse and complex offender populations..

Our department needs evidence and to inform and shape our work and sector outcomes.

Themes from consultation:

- Expansion of community based alternatives to custody that are responsive to offender risk, needs, culture, gender and individual circumstances.
- Victim input to the design, development and review of policy, programs and practice.
- Investigate and trial new and innovative practices, supervision/ management arrangements, use of technology etc. across bail, community based orders, parole and extended supervision orders to achieve sentencing and rehabilitation outcomes.
- Strategies to build the organisation's capability for idea creation/ problem solving/ solution finding/ risk taking, institutionalising innovation, use of innovation tools and approaches, building a research and development culture, strategies to transform existing ways of working toward improved and sustainable outcomes.
- Strategies for leading and working more effectively – how do we build an inclusive organisational culture, leadership capabilities, innovation, knowledge-sharing, NGO and other agency partner capacity, new/ innovative partnership and engagement models, emerging contracting models and agreements between government and non-government, metrics to measure success of partnering activities, co-design practice for service / program development and innovation.
- Investigating opportunities for system reform and improvement.

The premise behind this theme is novel approaches to business improvement, leading change through collaborations and partnerships and identifying strategies that promote effective system reform without sacrificing the overall integrity of the system. Though custodial and community environments each have their own particular needs and challenges - renewal and innovation can improve overall system operations and outcomes in terms of efficiencies, effectiveness and the quality of the system and service provision.

Focus areas for investigation include;

Renewal, Innovation and Improvement

- What are the opportunities where changes in tools, practices, or approaches could improve performance in the correctional system, and what are the highest-priority needs?
- Effectiveness of Intensive Supervision Orders and new and innovative sentencing options linked to Reducing Reoffending 10% by 2020;
- Research, propose and scope new and innovative initiatives to support Reducing Reoffending 10% by 2020 outcomes;
- Perceptions of education and vocational training in custody – an offenders experience of training and pathways to post release employment.
- Opportunities for the utilization artificial technology as a means to improving correctional practices and systems
- Strategies for fostering an organisational culture that inspires collaboration and business improvement
- Innovative initiatives to support reducing reoffending

Leading and working together

- Staff perceptions of community supervision in a context of change;
- Working with the women's safety sector to improve outcomes for victims and ensure perpetrator accountability;
- Effective strategies to promote optimal program and service outcomes when working together with third sector organisations;
- Supports and partnerships to enable women offenders to succeed on HD/community based orders-engagement, meaningful activity and post release pathways.
- Innovative partnership and engagement models and emerging contracting models.

System reform and improvement

- Strategies to strengthen workforce management practices and flexibility;
- Strategies to increase revenue generating prison industries to offset the cost of custodial services;
- Effectiveness of processes and business capacity to manage and analyse information related to the organisation's intelligence and security needs;
- Evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of new assessment approaches and tools;
- Improving data and analytical capability to meet a diversity of business information and analysis needs;
- Identify, trial and evaluate opportunities for system improvements and savings.

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