



Department of Corrective Services  
Government of Western Australia

Office of the Commissioner

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Dr Brian Gordon  
The Principal Research Officer  
Community Development and Justice Standing Committee  
Legislative Assembly  
Parliament House  
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Mr Gordon

**INQUIRY INTO COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES IN GOVERNMENT**

Thank you for inviting the Department of Corrective Services to take this opportunity to contribution to the Inquiry into Collaborative Approaches in Government.

Please find attached the Department of Corrective Services contribution to the inquiry.

Please do not hesitate to contact  or  if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely

  
Ian Johnson  
COMMISSIONER

11 May 2008

## **Collaborative Approaches Department of Corrective Services**

The Department of Corrective Services' role in the justice system is essentially ensuring a safer community by encouraging offenders towards a lawbiding lifestyle.

Breaking the offending cycle provides long term benefits to the community as not only does it reduce the incidence of crime (and the victims) it also assists with the inter-generational growth of crime related families.

More recently government authorities that manage prisons and justice systems have understood that support must go beyond the prison wall. The new skills and knowledge that prisoners have developed in prison need the support of the community post release.

The Department of Corrective Services in response to linking prisoners back to their community provide a range of innovative programs, in conjunction with community groups, both within the prison walls and in the community aimed at reducing recidivism.

The four initiatives where the Department of Corrective Services work in conjunction with other agencies and non-government organisations are:

1. Boronia Pre-Release Centre for Women – Parent Child Program
2. Acacia Prison – Managed by Serco
3. Community Re-Entry Coordination Service (Re-entry Link)
4. New Prison in Derby

### **Boronia Pre release Centre for Women – Parent Child Program**

Boronia Pre-Release Centre for Women has developed a Parent Child Program in joint partnership with Extra Edge Community Services. Extra Edge receives funding through the National Community Crime Prevention Program (Community Safety) and delivers a program jointly with GOWRIE Family Services. This program was implemented in January 2008.

The program aims to use early learning and positive parenting approaches to connect with mothers in custody, who may have children in residence or visiting the prison. The participants of this initiative experience positive parent-child relationships and learn how to apply these principles when they are released.

The program is similar to a program currently delivered to the wider community through Extra Edge. However, in order to address the specific needs of the women and their children at Boronia, Extra Edge tailored the program in a way that seeks to interact positively and to encourage participation.

The primary aim of the program is to assist women post-custody to provide a positive stable and nurturing home environment for their children. To achieve this, participants need to build such a relationship with their children and develop new skills to maintain the relationship.

The intent of this child focused program is to:

- prevent abuse of children;
- prevent re-offending behaviour of mothers;
- prevent offending behaviours in children-decrease the risk of inter-generational offending;
- increase the chance of a 'normal' childhood;
- build stronger family ties and develop support networks for post-release
- increase parenting abilities; and
- assist in developmental milestones being met appropriately and accordingly as per research into Early Years Development (2002).

The local Rotary Club has also supported the program by recently agreeing to provide a shade structure over a newly developing play area situated adjacent to the room where program is delivered.

Current research shows that the children of prisoners are the most vulnerable and powerless in the community. The consequences of parental imprisonment, especially the mother can include social isolation, antisocial behaviour, education failure, premature departure from home, early child-bearing and joblessness during adolescence, with a percentage of these children eventually going to be incarcerated themselves.

It is hoped the learnt skills from this program will transfer into their living environment outside of custody. The use of an external agency, that already services the broader community, provides the opportunity for this necessary post-release support.

### **Acacia Prison – Managed by Serco**

Acacia Prison is owned by the Department of Corrective Services; however responsibility for managing the prison is currently with Serco Australia Pty Ltd.

The Prison is situated some 50km east of Perth, near the township of Wooroloo and is the first privately managed prison in Western Australia. The prison was designed after extensive research into best practise in other leading countries.

Acacia can hold up to 750 prisoners with medium-security ratings. It has an open campus-style plan and allows for significant freedom of movement within the perimeter wall.

The Prison was recently inspected by the Inspector of Custodial Services who indicated that the prison's strong points included:

- No escapes or serious incidents to trigger abatement under the contract.
- No deaths in custody and low levels of self harm.

- Improvements to levels of accommodation (by having most prisoners in standard rather than basic levels).
- The management of protection prisoners.
- The timely delivery of offender treatment programs.
- Improved drug treatment philosophies and programs.
- The introduction of a menu choice.
- Improved health services.
- Strong re-entry initiatives.
- A positive and responsive attitude from Serco.
- Serco's financial standing and corporate structure.

### **Community Re-Entry Coordination Service (Re-entry Link)**

The Community Re-entry Coordination Service (Re-Entry Link) provides support to prisoners and their families and assists offenders in their re-entry back into the community as a component of preventing re-offending.

Through reduction in the re-offending cycle of prisoners the initiative provides protection to the community.

The Re-entry Link service provides:

- Short term support for new prisoners on Remand (not currently offered in Male Metro prisons);
- Support and Life skills information sessions for prisoners 3 months prior to release; and
- Support for prisoners and their families 6 months after release.

The re-entry link program is located in all prisons and covers all regions across Western Australia in partnership with community organisations.

Agency	Region Client Group
Ruah Community Services	Metropolitan services to female prisoners
Outcare Inc	Metropolitan services to male prisoners
Geraldton Resource centre	Midwest, Murchison-Gascoyne Regions
Goldfields Centrecare	Eastern Goldfields Region
Men's Outreach Centre Marnju Jarndu	Kimberley Region Services to male prisoners Kimberley Region Services to female prisoners
Hedland CDEP Aboriginal Corporation	Pilbara
ASWA	South West Region
Regional counselling and mentoring Services	Great Southern Region

The Department of Corrective Services monitors the delivery of the program and reports on its successes through performance measures identified in the individual agreements. The Department utilises information collected by the contracted service providers using the Re-Entry Service Provider Community, where client information is entered directly into the system.

Formal clients are supported for up to nine months (three months prior to release and six months following release). In the 06/07 financial year the various agencies provided services to 1155 prisoners. Since inception the program has serviced an increased number of clients each quarter including an increase of 50% in the number of Aboriginal clients supported by the program. In 2007/2008, 62.6% of the formal client group were Aboriginal.

Significantly a number of the formal clients have families with children. In 2007/2008, 48.5% of formal clients had children. This is significant in the need to provide family support services post release to not only address the offending behaviour of the current generation but of future generations as well.

The number of prisoners who return to prison is an indicator of the success of the program. Only 18.4% of prisoners who were supported under the Re-entry Link Program in the 06/07 year returned to prison. This percentage has fallen during the life of the project and compares favourably to the 40.6% recidivism rate amongst the overall prisoner population.

### **New Prison in Derby**

The Derby Prison Project involves the construction of a 150 bed, mixed gender, mixed security prison in the shire of Derby/West Kimberley. This will be a campus style prison offering a full range of services to prisoners from the Kimberley Region. A 25 bed Work Camp will also be located in the East Kimberley, it is expected that this work camp will provide a full range of corrective services to individuals in the region.

The new site for the work camp has been identified. The Department is currently working with the Department of Planning and Infrastructure to acquire the site.

The work camp will have 25 beds (plus an additional 15 beds to provide mobile capacity) and also comprise a mobile capacity which will enable work camp prisoners to undertake reparative activities in remote communities.

The Department is currently developing an operational model which will allow community justice offenders to access educational and programmatic activities at the work camp.

The attraction of suitably qualified staff for the new prison in Derby is being considered early in the project. The tight labour market and the competition for employees in the region require the development of innovative strategies as part of the Workforce Plan.

It is expected that the work camp will be operational in 2009.

The benefits are:

- Improved custodial facilities throughout Western Australia by increasing the number of secure prison beds.
- Placement of prisoners close to their family and their country, thus reducing the damaging emotional and psychological effects of their imprisonment and increasing the opportunity for positive behavioural change.
- Improved community safety in the Kimberley region through the development of modern secure custodial facilities.
- Improved community safety in the Kimberley region through the provision of appropriate therapeutic interventions, and improved recidivism rates.
- Capacity for the delivery of custodial services in a culturally appropriate manner so that they become vehicles for positive individual behavioural change.
- Greater options for Aboriginal people's involvement in supervised bail, parole and the completion of community service orders, acknowledging their recognition and acceptance of responsibility towards their own community.

## **Conclusion**

The opportunities to provide innovative programs such as those in Boronia and Re-entry examples were enhanced in 2007 through changes to the *Prisons Act 1981*. The programs were previously provided under general welfare parameters of the Act. Changes to Section 95 of the Act in 2007 provided greater scope and direction for CEO to deliver a range of programs designed to encourage prisoners to interact with their community. Other changes to Section 83 of the Act provided increased opportunity for those activities to take place outside of a prison through approved absence permits. During the last 12 months the Department of Corrective Services has looked at innovative ways to enhance the re-entry type programs and is currently developing a Prisoner Employment Program to assist prisoners with the transition from Prison employment to outside employment. Partnerships with various mining companies that are willing to provide training and employee ex-prisoners are significant.

The services at Acacia Prison are provided through Part IIIA of the *Prisons Act 1981* and the contract was re-written on 16 May 2006 when awarded to Serco. When re-writing the contract the Department refocused on managing the outcomes. This has given the impression of a compliance focus as described by the Inspector of Custodial Services but subsequent to that inspection, performance measures have been developed that focus on delivering training and support to prisoners. Acacia's new focus on constructive prisoner activity has seen them enter into private-private arrangements for the operations of prison industries that give prisoners real life skills suitable for gaining employment in the general community when released.



Planning for the new prison facility in Derby is well advanced. The staffing profile and human resources strategic plan of the facility has been developed. The profile aims to have 50% of all staff in the facility to be Aboriginal. Government Regional Officers Housing has developed a program of housing development to support the prison and the housing will be completed prior to the opening of the new prison.

Consultation and Communication by the development team is supported through the development of a local Derby Community Reference Group and the wider Kimberley Cultural Advisory Group. These groups will provide the Department with the opportunity to work with local agencies to develop interrelationships.