

A person is sitting on a blue plastic chair in front of a prison fence. The fence is made of metal panels and has several layers of barbed wire on top. The person is wearing a white t-shirt and green shorts. The background is a clear blue sky.

# INSIDE STORIES

Tackling the increasing prison  
population of young adults

An Independent report commissioned by Shark Island Productions  
October 2014

# About this report

This report was commissioned by Shark Island Productions as an adjunct to the documentary film *'Stories from the Inside'*, a film created and produced by the young men in the Youth Unit at Port Phillip Prison. The purpose of the film was to enable young offenders to tell the stories of how they came to be in prison and what prison is like. It is their attempt to tell other young people about the realities of making poor decisions and the consequences.

This report gives background to current trends in imprisonment in Australia and highlights the achievements of the Youth Unit and the potential to impact on these trends by scaling this model nationally. It draws on the literature, program evaluations and personal interviews with over one hundred people working in the criminal justice system from most jurisdictions in Australia. It calls for action by government, business, the not for profit sector, philanthropy/social finance groups and the wider community to work together for systemic change.

The report does not advocate prison as a response to the social, economic and health problems so often manifest in the criminal justice system; it is far better for no young person to ever go to prison. In the current system, however, for those young adults that do go to prison, this report advocates for a better way to manage their time inside and on release; to stop the revolving door and break the cycle of incarceration embedded in our most marginalised communities.

This report is the property of Shark Island Productions.

The author is Stephanie Exton.

The films *'Stories from the Inside'* and *'The Youth Unit'*, together with the report *'Inside Story'* are all available at: <http://storiesfromtheinside.com.au>

NB: This report does not comprehensively survey every program or strategy relating to youth rehabilitation and reintegration in Australia, but highlights a number of examples. The report has been prepared in good faith and every effort has been made to accurately record and relate information gathered from primary and secondary sources. This report contains the views of Shark Island Productions and readers are responsible for assessing the relevance and accuracy of the content of this publication. Shark Island Productions will not be liable for any loss, damage, cost or expense incurred or arising by reason of any person using or relying on information in this publication.

G4S and Port Phillip Prison worked with Shark Island Productions and Igniting Change in production of *'Stories From The Inside'* and *'The Youth Unit'*, this paper is independent of that process and does not necessarily reflect the views of G4S or Port Phillip Prison.

Acknowledgement and thanks are given to the numerous people who assisted with this work including people in prison, prison workers, directors and staff, government workers, judges and members of the judiciary, not for profit agencies and individual workers, victims of crime, philanthropists, employers and employment agencies.

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'I know that it works'



**Anne Hooker**

Youth Development Officer,  
on Port Phillip Prison's Youth Unit

# Executive Summary

In the last 30 years Australia's imprisonment rate has more than doubled<sup>1</sup> and during the last year the growth rate of the prison population was more than five times that of the general population<sup>2</sup>. But the majority of inmates – 60 percent – are recidivists, not first-time offenders<sup>3</sup>, and most people in prison come from a small number of geographical areas characterized by entrenched disadvantage.

With reoffending rates for young offenders estimated at 60%<sup>4</sup>, a young person exiting prison is more likely than not to reoffend and return. Reducing the rate of recidivism has been shown to have a greater impact on the rising rate of imprisonment than reducing the rate of initial prison entry<sup>5</sup>, and should be a priority focus of reform efforts.

Prisons are under pressure and change is urgently needed; this paper investigates trends, initiatives and research concerning the treatment of young adult offenders and the potential to reduce recidivism. It spotlights in particular a remarkable innovation in an Australian penal system that is otherwise resistant to reform – the Youth Unit at Port Phillip Prison – and shows that reform is not only good for offenders and the community, but makes economic sense as well. Significantly, it shows the role of philanthropy in enabling innovation through the building of long-term relationships, listening to the people experiencing the issues and catalysing resources.

## Key findings

- Lack of rehabilitation inside and support on release perpetuate the cycle of imprisonment and contribute to the current trends of increasing prison populations and costs;
- This cycle can be broken;
- Investment in reform can save significant amounts of money otherwise spent on incarceration and costs associated with criminal activity;
- It is essential to transform the culture that permeates our prison system, so that it celebrates and recognises the potential of young adults to emerge from detention ready to lead successful lives;
- But without diminishing the terrible impact of crime on victims, to also transform the culture in our communities from one that condemns ex-offenders to a lifetime of social exclusion to one that offers inclusion through education, employment and community participation;
- While in prison, physical separation of young offenders from older prisoners in an independent space is required;
- Low levels of maturity that are related to low socio economic backgrounds and found at disproportionate levels with young adults in prison need to be acknowledged;
- Maintaining family connections is important;
- Offending behaviour must be addressed through evidence based rehabilitation programs;
- Gaps in basic literacy and numeracy must be filled and followed by the provision of training and skills in preparation for employment;
- Commitment is required from industry to train, employ and mentor ex offenders;
- Ex-offenders trained under these conditions make some of the most reliable and trustworthy employees;
- It is important to genuinely listen to what people in prison want and need in order to break the cycle of offending;
- Different funding strategies are required to make an impact on entrenched social issues, such as high rates of recidivism.



'Until you put right social injustice, you're not entitled to boast of the justice meted out to thieves, for it's a justice more specious than socially desirable.

You allow these people to be brought up in the worst possible way, and systematically corrupted from their earliest years. Finally when they grow up and commit the crimes they were obviously destined to commit, ever since they were children, you start punishing them. In other words, you create thieves and then punish them for stealing.'<sup>6</sup>

**Sir Thomas More** 1517

# Call to action

This paper recommends a national commitment that integrates governments, business, the not for profit sector, philanthropy/social finance groups and the broader community in support of a new approach to the treatment of young adults in prison.



## Government

That the government and the opposition in each jurisdiction support the establishment of Youth Units in State and Territory Correctional Departments that are based on the model at Port Phillip Prison, so that as many young adult offenders as possible serve their time in an environment focused on rehabilitation and successful reintegration into their communities.

## Business

That businesses create employment opportunities for people who have been in prison by building partnerships with the Youth Units and support systems with not for profit agencies so that as many young people as possible leaving prison have a job and supportive system around them.

## Philanthropy and social finance

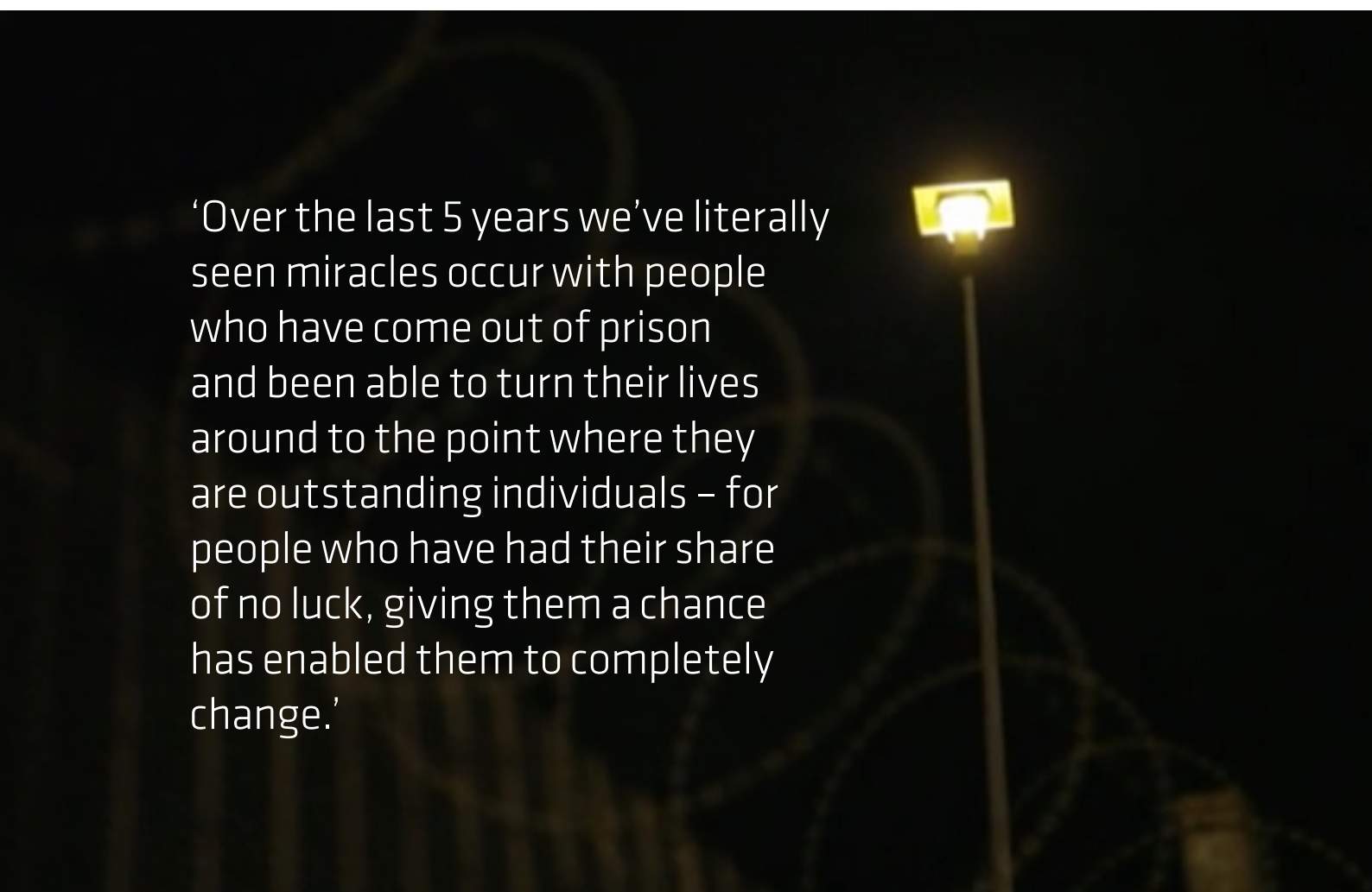
That philanthropic and social finance groups provide funding that supports innovation and evaluation, is long term, demand led, flexible and adaptive and supports collaboration between government, business and not for profits for systemic social change.

That these groups work with Government to explore options for expansion of the Youth Units in all states and territories that respond to local conditions and may include:

- Philanthropy that provides seed funding for programs to be funded by government when outcomes are established;
- Impact investing such as social impact bonds that return capital and interest to investors on the basis of cost savings to government;
- Business investment whereby financial investment in Youth Unit initiatives return a steady, reliable, supported workforce, (incorporated with government supported apprenticeships);
- Investment in social enterprises that are run within the Units and could contribute to the operational costs.

## Not for Profit and community

That not for profit agencies are supported to provide family and employment liaison workers to work with young adult offenders in the Youth Units pre and post release to ensure sustained family relationships and successful and ongoing employment. That communities are empowered to build cultural change such that young people leaving prison are given a second chance rather than marginalised forever, never to break the cycle of incarceration.

A night scene with a street lamp and trees. The street lamp is illuminated, casting a warm glow. The trees are dark and silhouetted against the night sky.

‘Over the last 5 years we’ve literally seen miracles occur with people who have come out of prison and been able to turn their lives around to the point where they are outstanding individuals – for people who have had their share of no luck, giving them a chance has enabled them to completely change.’

**Paul Little** former Managing Director, Toll Pty Ltd



# Part 1: Motivation for this work

## Imprisonment and recidivism current trends

The latest average daily number of prisoners in Australia was over 34,000<sup>7</sup>; in Victoria, the prison population increased nearly 20% during the last year<sup>8</sup>; in Western Australia cost blow outs have seen the cost of keeping an adult in prison rise to over \$121,000 annually<sup>9</sup>; youth detention facilities in Queensland are consistently operating at over capacity<sup>10</sup>; \$54M in new facilities are being built at the Alexander Maconochie Prison in the ACT to address accommodation pressures; rehabilitation programs have reduced accessibility due to overcrowding<sup>11</sup>; in Victoria prisons generate more complaints than any other state government entity subject to scrutiny by the Victorian Ombudsman and in 2013-14, more than 3,000 complaints were received<sup>12</sup>; the Northern Territory imprisonment rate is more than 4 times the national rate<sup>13</sup>.

Since 1984, Australia's imprisonment rate has more than doubled<sup>14</sup>, and the current annual growth rate of the prison population is more than five times that of the general population<sup>15</sup>.

While the average daily number of prisoners in June 2014 was over 34,000<sup>16</sup>, this count does not represent the total number of people flowing in and out of prison throughout the year. In 2006, for example, when the count was 25,790 the flow through number was estimated to be over 50,000, however there is no national statistical analysis of this to draw on<sup>17</sup>.

## Reoffending

Reoffending contributes significantly to the imprisonment rate. More people in prison are recidivists than first timer offenders. 58% of prisoners in the 2013 census had previously served a sentence in an adult prison, and of those sentenced in the last 12 months over 63% had served a previous term<sup>18</sup>. This number, however, would be higher if it were measured in relation to the flow through number of prisoners each year as the census is skewed by those on long sentences who, on the whole, are not recidivists<sup>19</sup>.

## Young adult offenders

Young adult offenders under the age of 25 have the highest recidivism rates per age<sup>20</sup>. One study found 60% of 17-20 year olds released from prison returned to prison within two years, in contrast to less than 5% of those over 50<sup>21</sup>.

**According to the 2013 census just over 15% of people in prison were under the age of 25 and about 35% were between the ages of 25 and 35<sup>22</sup>. Offending rates are at their highest in the 15-19 age group and this is four times the offending rate of people aged between 20 and 24; the age at which offending peaks is 18-19 years<sup>23</sup>.**

Research by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research<sup>24</sup> shows that greater reductions in the prison population can be made by reducing re-offending than by measures to reduce the rate of newly sentenced prisoners, and substantial savings can be made by reducing re-offending. Analysis of the NSW prison population of 3,260 in 2008 shows that a 10% reduction in the reimprisonment rate reduces the prison population by 25%, whereas a 10% reduction in newly sentenced prisoners reduces the population by 20%. It also shows that focusing on cohorts of the prison population with high rates of recidivism, such as young people, can impact on imprisonment rates more than by focusing on the general prison population.

**'Most significantly, it finds that current mainstream intervention programs are proving ineffective, but they can improve outcomes if lessons learned are adopted from effective programs and greater account is taken of the evidence generated by these programs and their evaluation.'**



## Young people and adults - the differences and the confusion

There is a marked difference between the treatment of juveniles and adults involved in criminal justice. In general, the identification of children (under the age of 18, and 17 in Queensland<sup>25</sup>), as separate to adults includes agreement that their treatment needs to reflect their inexperience and immaturity. Conversely, the treatment of adults assumes higher levels of experience and maturity.

### Brain development

Recent research<sup>26</sup> in the development of young brains and the impact of conditions associated with socio economic disadvantage, however, reveals that the assumed levels of maturity in adult offenders are often not evident. One professional working with young people in prison has suggested that developmentally they are often more like 7-11 year olds, and are unable to:

- take responsibility for their actions
- think about the consequences of their actions
- take care of themselves or other people<sup>27</sup>

Specifically, the research identifies that brain development, especially with regard to

- areas responsible for planning, impulse control and the processes of cognitive function and emotional regulation, continues well into the mid 20s;
- moral reasoning, or knowing and applying what is right and wrong, is largely dependent upon social, economic and cultural environments; and
- behavioural development in relation to independence and self reliance, the ability to assess risk and understand the consequences of one's actions and understanding the views of others and the wider context, depend very much upon childhood experiences, which are often severely limited by conditions associated with socioeconomic disadvantage<sup>28</sup>.

Significantly, however, this research also shows that the brain is eminently changeable with high levels of plasticity that enable it to keep developing and changing in response to influences beyond previously accepted developmental periods in a child's life.

The treatment of juveniles in the criminal justice system is based on the premise that their offending behaviour is not solely a matter of individual choice, but is largely determined by influences beyond a child's control, and therefore is better dealt with through a welfare or support oriented, rather than punitive, approach<sup>29</sup>. It also acknowledges that while young people may be criminally responsible, due to lack of maturity, they lack the degree of insight, judgment and self-control generally expected of an adult<sup>30</sup>.

As a response to this, there is greater emphasis on diversion options for juveniles and more resources are devoted to the rehabilitation of inmates of juvenile justice facilities compared to young adults in prison<sup>31</sup>. In Victoria the value of rehabilitation for young offenders who are older than the official age of a child is recognized through the provision of the dual track system in which young offenders up to the age of 21 may, at the discretion of the judge, be placed in juvenile detention rather than an adult prison. About half of all 18-20 year olds who go through the courts in Victoria are sentenced to youth detention rather than adult prison<sup>32</sup>.

For adults, on the other hand, the premise is that an individual is responsible for his or her behaviour and, as a function of their age in years, has insight, judgment and self-control. The treatment of adults, therefore, is more punitive than welfare- or support-oriented.

**This research calls into question the suitability of treating young offenders as if they have adult maturity because of their age in years and suggests that greater acknowledgement of levels of maturity and the childhood experiences need to be included in the design of the treatment of young adult offenders in prisons.**

An analysis of the characteristics of people in prison shows that on the whole they have backgrounds that limit the growth of maturity.

## Who are the people in our prisons?

Data collected in prisons, the courts and by police is primarily for administrative purposes. Research data concerning criminal justice issues that could help practitioners and policy makers understand the issues and potentially inform program or systemic development is limited. Many sources including prisoner surveys, research projects and meta analyses were investigated to present this general profile of the people in our prison systems.

Most people in prison come from a small number of highly disadvantaged localities, for example, 30% of people in prison in NSW come from just 4 postcodes, and the majority come from just 10<sup>33</sup>. 85% of people in prison have not completed high school and 35% have not completed year 10<sup>34</sup>. People in prison have far greater health needs than the general population with high levels of mental illness, chronic disease, communicable disease and disability<sup>35</sup>; they have 3-5 times the rate of mental illness compared to the general population<sup>36</sup>, and in Victoria, studies show the rate of acquired brain injury in people in prison is 42% compared to 2% in the general population<sup>37</sup>.

In 2013, 58% of male and 78% of female police detainees were unemployed<sup>38</sup>. 85% of females in prison were victims of sexual, physical or emotional abuse, and 25% of non-Indigenous and 45% of Indigenous people in prison have spent part of their childhood in out of home care<sup>39</sup>.

On average 65% of police detainees test positive to drug use<sup>40</sup>. 70% of males and 80% of females in prison have been illicit drug users outside prison; and 80% of crimes for which people are imprisoned are related to drug use and addiction<sup>41</sup>.

Indigenous adults are 15 times more likely to be in prison than non-Indigenous adults<sup>42</sup>, and Indigenous youth are 28 times more likely to be in juvenile detention than non-Indigenous young people<sup>43</sup>.

Generally people in the system have multiple issues of disadvantage experienced over generations. Often when they enter prison they are joining family members. Former Victorian Supreme Court Judge Frank Vincent says, *'These subcultures assume a power of their own that further entrenches alienation and inhibits aspiration. On one occasion, a young prisoner, in an attempt to impress the Board on*

*which I was sitting said, "Judge, you knew my father." I responded, "Son, I knew your grandfather". That remark seems humorous until thought is given to what it conveyed.'*<sup>44</sup>

While the effects of crime and the devastation it causes to victims, families and the community are abhorrent and while we are not absolving people who have been convicted of terrible crimes for the ruin and destruction they have caused, we cannot absolve ourselves of blame in allowing society to care so little for its most marginalised members but can instead work together for a safer community. Perhaps not much has changed since 1571 when Thomas More wrote; *'Until you put right social injustice, you're not entitled to boast of the justice meted out to thieves, for it's a justice more specious than socially desirable. You allow these people to be brought up in the worst possible way, and systematically corrupted from their earliest years. Finally when they grow up and commit the crimes they were obviously destined to commit, ever since they were children, you start punishing them. In other words, you create thieves and then punish them for stealing.'*<sup>45</sup>

In the juvenile age group, it is a similar story: for young people aged 10-17 who were given custodial sentences in 2009/10, records from the Victorian Youth Parole Board reveal that:

- 35% had previous child protection involvement; 16% had current child protection involvement;
- 55% were victims of abuse, trauma or neglect prior to incarceration; 66% had been suspended or expelled from school;
- 34% presented with mental health issues;
- 14% were registered with Disability Services;
- 88% of cases had alcohol or drugs related to the offending and 12% were parents<sup>46</sup>.

As one prominent lawyer said in confidence, *'If you want to know who goes to prison, go sit in the children's court for a day.'*

Or as another experienced professional working in Australian prisons on deaths in custody put it, *'If you want to know how to stop people going to prison, ask yourself why you aren't there, and you have the answers.'*<sup>47</sup>

**This is a note sent to the author by a worker in NSW assisting people exiting prison in employment. He found it pinned to the wall behind the door of the guard's office in the prison he was working in and thought it relevant to this research.**

*We want them to have self-worth  
so we destroy their self-worth.*

*We want them to be responsible  
so we take away all responsibilities.*

*We want them to be part of our community  
so we isolate them from the community.*

*We want them to be positive and constructive  
so we degrade them and make them useless.*

*We want them to be non-violent  
so we put them where there is violence all around them.*

*We want them to be kind and loving people  
so we subject them to hatred and cruelty.*

*We want them to quit being a tough guy  
so we put them where the tough guy is respected.*

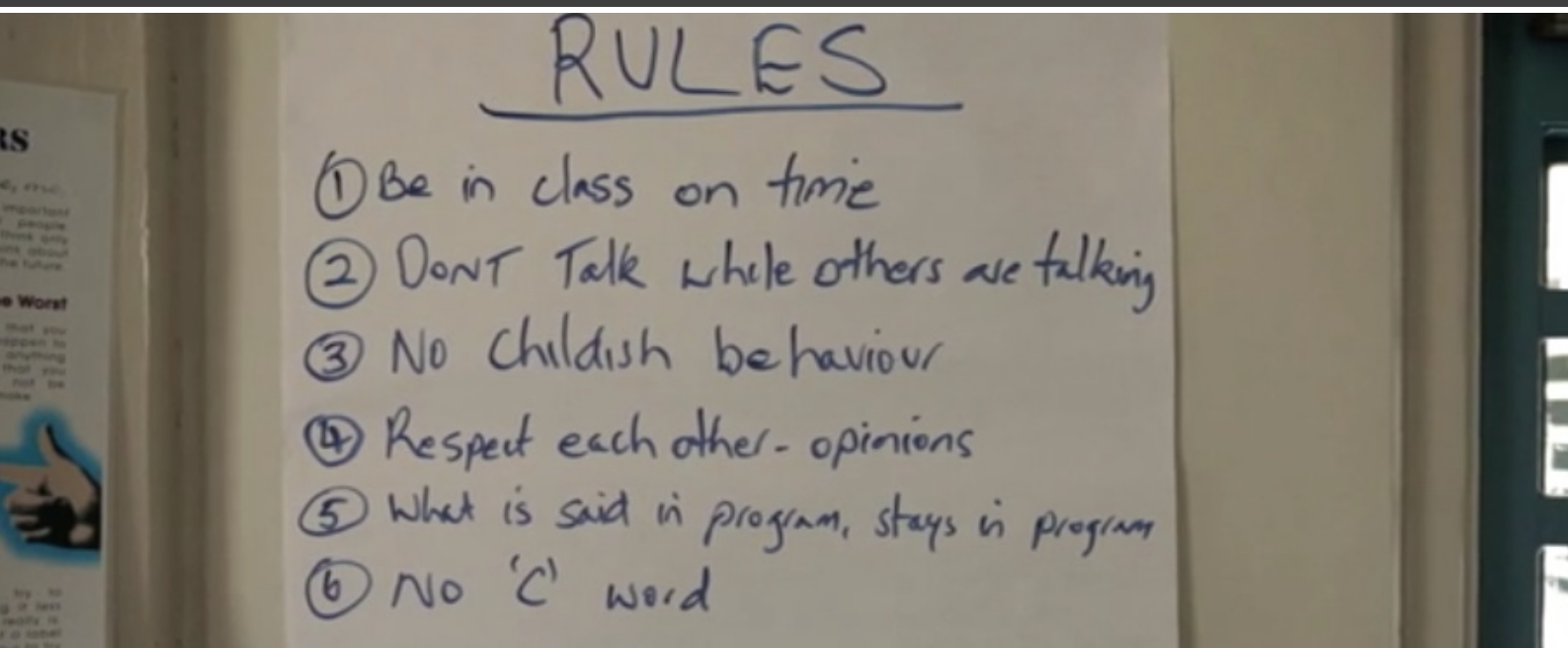
*We want them to quit hanging around with losers  
so we put all the losers in the state under one roof.*

*We want them to quit exploiting us  
so we put them where they exploit each other.*

*We want them to take control of their own lives, own  
their own problems, and quit being a parasite  
so we make them totally dependant on us.*

**Judge Denni Challeen in the New Zealand journal *Stimulus***

'The Youth Unit is a safe place – we're not living in fear like you are in mainstream. When you live in fear, you are constantly watching your back. You can't focus on the future or why you are inside, but in the Youth Unit you can. It means you can move forward and not come back.'



**22 year old prisoner** Youth Unit, Port Phillip Prison

## Part 2: Analysis of new initiatives

The issues concerning the high incarceration and recidivism rates of young adult men are well recognised nation-wide, and while some innovation in treatment is apparent, the Youth Unit at Port Phillip Prison appears to stand out in terms of evaluated outcomes.

**Key findings from the evaluation of the Unit by Monash University in 2012 included that recidivism rates for young men who had spent a minimum of 60 days in the Unit were 32%<sup>48</sup>, which was 20% less than the recidivism rate of the comparison group in the study<sup>49</sup>.**

### The Youth Unit, Port Phillip Prison

The Unit expands the 'what works' model for young offenders to a holistic model that encompasses four main areas of a young person's life: offending behaviour, personal development, employment and leisure/recreation.

The distinguishing features of the Unit are that it

- employs a specialist youth development officer;
- separates prisoners under the age of 25 from older prisoners;
- requires mandatory participation in personal development programs, education and training;
- incorporates prisoner mentors who bridge the gap between inmates and authorities; employs specially selected and trained staff;
- runs a successful T shirt printing social enterprise and
- links pre-release programs with employment and post-release support.

In addition, the Unit is distinguished from mainstream prison units by its involvement with the outside community, which is encouraged in terms of

- maintaining family connections through visits by Skype,
- enabling visits from philanthropic donors,
- leadership programs with corporate groups and
- the incorporation of volunteers into the small business program.

**Primarily, the Youth Unit adopts a culture that is predicated on the belief in the young offenders' ability to change their behaviour.**

Programs at the Youth Unit are innovative and challenge young people to change the way they think and do things. Programs do not just address criminal behaviour; they must enable the individual to change and take a different view of the world. All theory is delivered in conjunction with practical opportunities to reinforce learning.

The Youth Unit addresses three main areas that are often missing in the broader prison system:

- **Care** – The prisoner learns that staff and other prisoners care for him and that he is expected to care for others. In learning this, he learns to care for himself, often for the first time;
- **Responsibility and leadership** – Many young prisoners deny responsibility for their crime as they have never been required to take responsibility for their actions. Often this is because they have been neglected or abused. At every opportunity in the Unit, inmates are required to take responsibility for their actions.
- **Consequences of actions** – This is fundamental to the working of the Unit and addresses one of the main deficiencies of young immature adults who remain in the self-centered mindset of a child.

## Best Practice

The Youth Unit incorporates internationally recognised principles of best practice for the treatment of young offenders. Research shows that therapeutic and rehabilitation-oriented youth detention centres and adult prisons demonstrate greater reduction in recidivism and re-incarceration rates than regimes with a punitive focus. It follows that in order to be effective in reducing recidivism, in-prison youth units should also have a rehabilitative orientation and purpose, rather than functioning to simply segregate and/or protect young inmates from the adult inmate population<sup>50</sup>.

The following, taken from the Monash Evaluation, is a summary of best practice principles for working with young people in an in-prison youth unit program with the aim of reducing recidivism and re-incarceration and promoting other related positive social and personal outcomes. The evaluation found that these principles are adhered to at the Port Phillip Prison Youth Unit.

### 1. Programs should be designed according to 'what works'

An important factor in the effectiveness of programs is their adherence to evidence-based principles of risk, need and responsivity. Programs should therefore be aimed at those with the greatest risk of reoffending and provide minimal intervention to first-time or low-risk offenders. In order to achieve this, appropriate risk and need assessments of prospective participants should be carried out in order to accurately and consistently screen and match offenders to suitable programs that address each individual's needs. Similarly, appropriate risk assessment and screening of activities should be conducted prior to program implementation to ensure that they are suitable to the program objectives.

To meet individuals' needs, programs for Indigenous or culturally and linguistically diverse young people should be responsive by involving significant others, including culturally relevant content and employing staff who can relate appropriately to the participants<sup>51</sup>. It is important to match the surroundings, program, staff and participants, and to consider peer influences and group dynamics. Programs should also be designed to be adequate in duration and intensity to influence participant

behaviour and provide meaningful and generous amounts of interaction between participants and program staff.

### 2. Procedures and theoretical underpinnings of programs must be clearly articulated.

It should be clear to administrators, staff and participants what the objectives, roles and procedures of programs are, in order for intended outcomes to be achieved. Articulation of program objectives should include a cause and effect rationale for crime and offending behaviour, based on experimentally sound data from disciplines such as psychology, criminology and related social science. Administrators, staff and participants should understand the rationale to varying degrees of complexity, and program authority structures should be made transparent with clearly articulated rules and expectations, and consequences for non-compliance.

### 3. Effective programs require effective implementation

Poorly implemented programs can have no effect on recidivism or actually increase recidivism, so in order to successfully implement programs in a prison or other correctional setting, environmental and other issues that could act as barriers must be considered and addressed. There is evidence to suggest that in-prison programs for young offenders are more likely to be successful if all levels and categories of prison employees (such as security and clinical staff) are included in the development and implementation of the program, as this can assist to develop a shared understanding of the intended goals of the program and an allegiance to these. Creating a sense of ownership over the program amongst all staff members, means that staff are more likely to invest time, energy and enthusiasm towards the program and its participants and ultimately assist to ensure its success.

### 4. Effective programs employ selected and suitably trained staff

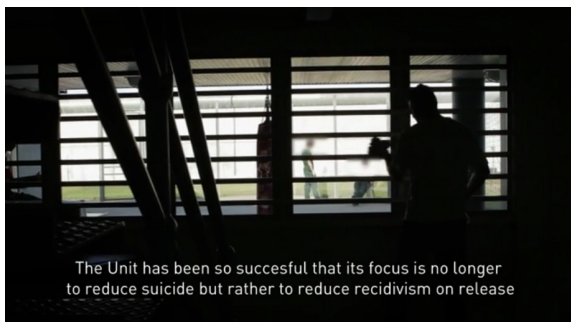
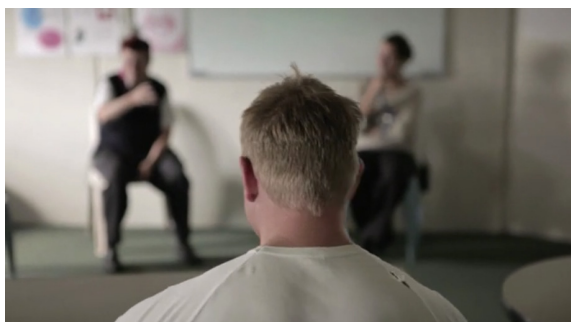
There is clear evidence to suggest that staff employed in a program designed to meet the criminogenic and other needs of young offenders should be carefully selected and must have adequate, ongoing and appropriate training to respond to these needs. Formal screening of staff against a set of desired criteria can assist to ensure





Programs in the Youth Unit include:

- Basic literacy and numeracy
- Financial literacy
- Anger management and goal setting
- Cognitive skills training
- Problem solving
- Parenting and communication
- Specific employment training eg. fork-lift truck driving
- Small business skills



The Unit has been so successful that its focus is no longer to reduce suicide but rather to reduce recidivism on release



appropriate selections are made. Initial and ongoing structured professional development must be provided to staff to develop appropriate skills to understand and work effectively with challenging adolescent behaviour. Extending such training, even at basic level to staff in non-direct program delivery roles, can assist to develop a shared understanding of and support for the intended goals of youth-specific programs across an institution.

### 5. Effective programs directly address offending behaviour

To reduce recidivism, programs must address participants' specific criminogenic needs such as negative peer influences, family issues, alcohol and other drug use, aggression and violence issues and pro-criminal attitudes and beliefs. To assist in addressing criminogenic needs, programs can employ a cognitive behaviour approach and social skills training, as offending behaviour is concurrent with deficits in thought processes and limited and poorly developed aptitude for decision making and problem solving. Specifically, programs should assist to teach participants skills in functional personal and social problem solving

In addition, program staff should employ pro social modelling and challenge pro criminal beliefs and attitudes to effectively target criminogenic needs.

### 6. Multi modal interventions using a cognitive behavioural approach are most effective

Programs that employ multiple methods of interventions in order to target multiple risk factors, rather than just one per intervention have a greater effect on reducing recidivism. Nonetheless caution should be exercised when using multiple intervention methods within one program to not lose the integrity of any one method of intervention – it is imperative that the goals and associated tasks of individual intervention methods remain clear and distinct. Programs that focus on the interaction between thoughts, feelings and behaviour during the commission of an offence in order to modify the way in which a young person thinks and behaves are specially effective.

### **7. Education/vocation training programs can be effective when delivered in certain conditions**

Educational programs based in correctional facilities have greater positive impacts if they are delivered in conjunction with other interventions such as social skills training, incentive schemes, one-to-one staff-inmate supervision, transitional after-care and employment training in order to maximise reductions in recidivism. Educational programs should contain skill-based components to boost educational achievements and prospects of employment. Education and vocational training programs should be linked to genuine prospects of subsequent employment. Effective educational and vocational training programs are dependent on the effective management and reduction of environmental hindrances such as overcrowding, population fluxes and transfers that disrupt learning and achievements. The use of flexible education delivery options should be considered with a continuum of educational and vocational training being offered uniformly across prison units and sites to provide service consistency to participants and real opportunities to achieve academic and vocational outcomes.

In order to maintain the long-term, immediate and short term positive outcomes of in prison programs (e.g. reductions in recidivism and engagement in school or employment), such programs must include adequate, comprehensive and realistic exit-planning and after care components.

### **8. Mentoring could be a useful method to support in-prison programs**

Mentoring appears to be a promising strategy to reduce offending behaviour but requires further evaluation, with particular attention to the role of relationship and contextual factors in determining program outcomes. Youth mentoring programs should be compliant with evidence based design and implementation principles. Prospective participants of mentoring programs should be screened to target high risk young people or those already involved in anti-social or criminal behaviour as it is with this group of young people that mentoring appears to have the greatest positive effect on reducing recidivism.

### **9. Aftercare is essential to maintaining reductions in recidivism and other positive in-prison program outcomes**

Programs must recognise and address the period of transition from a correctional institutional environment to the community and appears to be one of the most challenging tasks for young offenders to manage successfully, no matter what type of treatment is offered within an institutional setting. In order to maintain the long-term, immediate and short term positive outcomes of in prison programs (e.g. reductions in recidivism and engagement in school or employment), such programs must include adequate, comprehensive and realistic exit-planning and after care components. In preparation for after-care components, in prison programs should take on a holistic approach and attempt to operate across individuals' social contexts and areas of influence, encompassing and involving family members, significant others, peers, other relevant institutions (e.g. school) and the community. It is noted that while the above points are true for both adult and young offenders, they appear even more pertinent to programs that target young offenders.

### **10. Ongoing program monitoring and evaluation procedures are crucial**

Programs should be continuously and independently monitored and evaluated to determine their effectiveness and to identify components that are less effective in order to reproduce and improve interventions.

## Programs at the Port Phillip Prison Youth Unit

### Personal development:

- Risk taking behaviour, self control, personal responsibility and self esteem. Cognitive Skills training is mandatory and forms the basis of engagement in all other programs. Programs are available on a daily basis and scheduled around other educational/vocational programs. Programs are facilitated by officers with appropriate training or by external providers. Officers selected to facilitate programs must demonstrate the interpersonal skills required to engage the participants.

### Education:

- Basic literacy and numeracy, English as a second language, information technology, hospitality, mathematics, occupational health and safety, certificate III in Business and VCAL, General Education and VIC Fit.

### Re-integration:

- Employment program, communication skills, job seeking skills, assertiveness training, anger management skills, stress management skills, life skills, relationships, budgeting skills, health and basic hygiene and cooking.

### Business initiatives:

- Prisoners complete Certificate II in Business in combination with the operation of a social enterprise. Business programs promote innovation, entrepreneurial spirit, employability and career education. Program participants are guided by comprehensive program manuals and experienced business and industry mentors from the community. The T-shirt business uses traditional screen printing. Since inception in 2005 it has printed over 5,000 T shirts for sale within the prison system and externally and has generated over \$180,000 in profits which have been distributed to charitable organisations determined by the inmates.

### Community Involvement:

- Businesses, philanthropists and community groups are encouraged to visit the Unit; engagement between inmates and visitors is open and honest and an opportunity for each party to listen and learn and understand how community involvement can help combat the stigma attached to prisons and prisoners, and break down the barriers that prevent reintegration.

## Evidence – Evaluation of the Youth Unit, Monash University

The evaluation of the Youth Unit by Monash University between 2007 and 2012<sup>52</sup> presents many significant findings including that compared to the two mainstream comparison groups chosen for the evaluation, the youth unit is safer, has a more a rehabilitative orientation, is viewed positively by prisoners and operates in a manner which is consistent with best practice principles.

Data from prison records during the evaluation period revealed:

- Critical incidents including assaults by prisoners on other prisoners and on staff occurred at around half the rate compared to the rest of the prison and the state as a whole
- There were no instances of self mutilation or suicide
- Rates of staff sick leave during the year were less than one third of the rates of sick leave across the rest of the prison
- Prisoners placed in the youth unit for more than 60 days had lower rates of return to prison compared to the comparison groups in the study

Prisoners in the youth unit in comparison to the control groups:

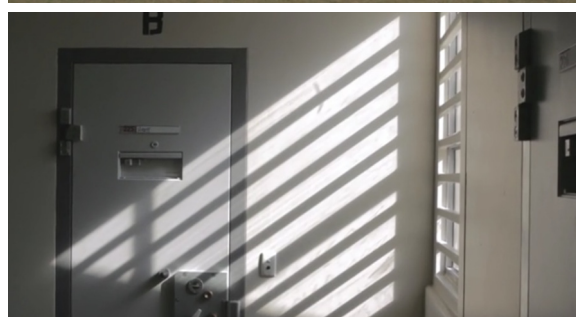
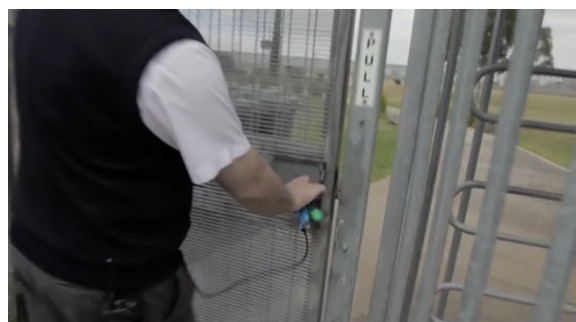
- Were happier with their relationships with prison staff, particularly the youth development officer
- Felt that staff were more focused on their rehabilitation
- Had higher levels of mental wellbeing and were more likely to have found a sense of purpose in prison
- Felt safer and reported fewer assaults or threats of assaults
- Were more likely to feel that the prison experience helped them to examine their offending behaviour
- Participated in more educational and self-developmental programs and courses
- Waited shorter periods to access programs
- Had helpful relationships with mentors in which older prisoners assisted them to adjust to prison life

Furthermore the benefits were not limited to the prisoners themselves, but extended to the staff. Prison officers in the youth unit compared to prison officers working elsewhere in the prison and at another prison:

- Felt safer
- Had more positive attitudes towards rehabilitation
- Were more likely to be women

An analysis of recidivism measured by return to prison within two years for those in the unit in 2009 suggested that prisoners who had spent time in the youth unit had lower recidivism rates than other prisoners in Port Phillip Prison. This was an expected outcome, given that those in the youth unit were first time prisoners. They also had marginally lower recidivism rates than a comparable group of first time prisoners in Fulham prison. For those who spent at least 60 days in the Youth Unit the recidivism rates were 32.5%, compared to 41% for those from Fulham. This outcome is clearly positive and compares favourably with suggestions in the literature review that a 9-10 percent improvement in recidivism could be considered worthwhile in public policy terms. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that this does not quite reach conventional levels of statistical significance. More ongoing evaluation of the program was recommended.<sup>53</sup>

An analysis of recidivism measured by return to prison within two years for those in the unit in 2009 suggested that prisoners who had spent time in the youth unit had lower recidivism rates than other prisoners in Port Phillip Prison.



## What it means in practice – Stories from the Inside

This section draws on conversations with people directly involved with prison systems in a number of Australian jurisdictions. In particular it talks about life in prison from the prisoners' point of view and then shows how the Youth Unit model addresses many of the issues raised.

### Age

Generally people in prison are not categorised by age. Older prisoners can have powerful effects on younger prisoners who are often stood over, manipulated and controlled, and physical restrictions like shared cells exacerbate the control and influence older prisoners exert on younger ones. In the Youth Unit, however, prisoners under the age of 25 are housed in a separate unit with single cells. They do have contact with older prisoners when they move about the prison, but their base ('home') is a safe, separate Unit.

### Safety

Prisoners report feeling fearful and anxious when first coming to prison, being scared of whom they will share a cell with and what will happen to them. Within the first 24 hours of coming to the Youth Unit, a young prisoner is connected with his mentor. They assess their mental health and make sure all their needs are met so that fear and anxiety are significantly reduced. One of the key benefits of the Unit that young inmates repeatedly mention is that it is a safe place to be.

### Responsibility

People in prison are denied autonomy. Decisions about every aspect of daily life, from when they sleep and what they eat to whom they spend time with and what they do, are made by authorities. In this regime, prisoners become dependent on outside control and immaturity concerning responsibility and self-reliance is reinforced. In the Youth Unit, however, taking responsibility for oneself is a key part of the philosophy. The young offenders are encouraged and supported to take responsibility for their actions and make decisions about daily life as much as possible.

Prison is a place of conflict where people do what they can to survive. Showing care is a sign of weakness. Reporting incidents often has one

labelled a 'dog' and exposed to retributions. There is no softness in prison, however in the Youth Unit, young men are encouraged to understand the reasons why they get angry, sad, depressed and anxious. Personal development programs are designed specifically to enable young men to learn about their emotions and how to manage them. They also learn about conflict resolution, collaboration, working as a team and tolerance of differences. These lessons are learned within personal development courses but are reinforced through opportunities that allow young men to play out what they learn, for example, in the small business enterprise 'Doin Time'<sup>54</sup> where they have to work as a team, be reliable and dependable. The Monash evaluation revealed that incidents generally related to conflict, such as assaults on staff or other prisoners, have been recorded at less than one third of the rate of incidents in other parts of the prison<sup>55</sup>.

### Use of time

While prison life is highly structured, there is a lot of free time. Boredom, depression and feeling overwhelmed aggravate mental health issues already much more prevalent than in the general population. In the Youth Unit this is addressed by having mandatory occupation with programs, education or employment between 10am and 5pm five days a week. Additionally, young men are encouraged to use the rest of their time in the pursuit of their educational and personal development goals.

Nationally in 2010/11 only 35% of eligible prisoners participated in education programs<sup>56</sup>. In the Unit, however, time is used to build on learning opportunities that will prepare a young man for release into employment and stable relationships. No time is wasted on trivial or menial pursuits unless participation at this level is part of a bigger plan to improve the capabilities of the individual.

Most people in prisons are moved through the system according to security, behaviour and safety requirements and with respect to individual management plans. This can disrupt their participation in programs. Prisoners on short sentences and on remand are generally not eligible to participate in offence-specific programs. In the Unit, however, all prisoners, including those on remand, are required to participate in the same educational and training regime.

### **Role modelling**

Prison enforces punishment through loss of liberty. The primary task of the mainstream prison officer is to maintain order and security, rather than to work therapeutically. In the Unit, however, all officers are specially selected and trained in therapeutic practice so that pro social behaviour is modelled at all times.

Additionally and most significantly, the Unit's major innovation is the incorporation of prisoner mentors. There is one for every 10 young inmates. They are a little older and have been in mainstream units. They do 50 hours training in therapeutic care and become the eyes and ears for the staff regarding each young inmate any of whom, at any time, may be highly vulnerable and at risk of suicide or self harm.

### **Connection to the Outside World**

Prison reduces outside contact with family and friends and while there are opportunities for visits, phone calls and letter writing, loneliness, isolation and despair are common. The Youth Unit runs a video visits program using Skype, so that young men can be in touch with their families, who might be far away, on at least a weekly basis. This vastly increases the frequency and regularity of contact between family and prisoner. A study in the UK found that when regular family contact is maintained through visits a prisoner is 38% less likely to reoffend on release<sup>57</sup>.

Many young people in prison are parents. In the UK, 54% of prisoners have children under the age of 18 on reception<sup>58</sup>. Children of prisoners are highly stigmatised. Almost two thirds of boys who have a father who has been in prison will go to prison themselves. In addition to the Skype visits program, young men in the Unit undertake parenting programs as part of their personal development.

### **Drug Use**

Many people come to prison already addicted to drugs and/or alcohol. Others develop addictions inside. If there are any issues related to drugs in the Unit, they are immediately dealt with in a supportive way. The aim is to help young people work through their addictions and address the underlying reasons for them so that the addiction can be broken and new ways of thinking are established.

### **Institutionalisation**

For some older prisoners, institutional care and long term exclusion from society can mean they are more comfortable in prison than outside. The point of the Youth Unit is to change people before they become institutionalised as it is well recognised that breaking long term institutionalisation at a later age is extremely difficult.

For some young people the routine of regular meals, laundry and washing facilities are a positive change from a chaotic family life or homelessness. These skills are taught to young inmates so that on release they can perform them for themselves.

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## After prison – Stories from the outside

Rehabilitation in prison is only half the story. As indicated, people exiting prison are stigmatised and often encounter many difficulties finding secure and safe housing, renewed and supportive relationships and employment. No matter how effective the rehabilitation inside prison may be, without acceptance and support of ex-offenders back into family, community and employment on release, the cycle of reoffending and returning to prison is unlikely to be broken. Again, this section is derived from conversations with people experiencing or working at the release from prison stage.

*'After being incarcerated you feel like society hates you, and everybody hates you, but even if just one person believes in you, it helps you carry on and keep going so you can make something of yourself despite what has happened in the past.'*

ex-offender, Perth, Western Australia.

### Sentence length

Most people are on short sentences and within a short time are back in the community: 35% of people in prison are on sentences of less than 2 years, 27% of sentences between 2 and 5 years and less than 5% on sentences of life or indeterminate length<sup>59</sup>.

Authorities and agencies formally acknowledge the value of 'through-care' programs – those that link support networks for people inside prison to life on the outside. However, in reality many services are not used by people leaving prison as they seek to sever ties with the 'system'. On the other hand, when authentic relationships are developed and there is genuine intention to assist a young offender, engagement is higher. These relationships are most effective when they begin when the offender is in prison and continue when he is released.

### Services

In general, services throughout Australia report a lack of resources. Caseloads are high, time is short, relapse rates are high and needs are multiple and complex. A growing prison population increases pressure on services that are already strained. Output-driven service delivery can inhibit movement of clients, as recording a prescribed number of events can be required to meet funding

obligations. Lack of program evaluation limits the effectiveness of program development and future policy making. Services are often separated into distinct categories, yet those who need them experience a range of interlinked issues which the services do not address as a whole.

While workers appreciate the need to collaborate and seek to provide the diversity their clients need, practical obstacles like location, lack of transport and limited communications can make this difficult. Clients are frequently required to retell their story many times, which is painful and distressing.

Relying on oral communication for young people with limited language skills can be problematic. As caseworkers regularly change, there is a lack of continuity. Young people tend to participate more because it is an obligation than because it is a means to improve their lives. Disengagement from services amongst this population is very high and starts very young.

### Housing

Housing is a critical issue for people leaving prison. For many, relationship problems mean that relying on family is not feasible. While emergency short-term housing is available in some jurisdictions, waiting lists for permanent housing can be years long.

For people who do have rental accommodation prior to imprisonment, it is usually impossible to keep this while they are inside. Without more housing support, people released from prison can easily go from crisis accommodation to friends, extended family, couch surfing, sleeping rough and ultimately reoffending.

### Employment

Opportunities to secure employment after prison are often limited due to lack of education, training, life skills, experience and connections. Employment attempts are often thwarted by restrictive regulations and prejudice. If they find employment, ex-offenders are often apprehensive to admit their parole conditions for fear of losing their job, so they don't ask their employers for time off and miss their parole meetings, which, ironically, can ultimately lead to further imprisonment for noncompliance.

Most inmates have relatively low levels of maturity, a problem which is often exacerbated by their time in prison, and this can reduce their capacity to



make decisions, think about consequences, take responsibility and be self-reliant when they are released.

**The Youth Unit at Port Phillip Prison seeks to support personal development to overcome these deficits and strengthen individual resilience and life skills that enable young people leaving prison to avoid re-offending.**

Additionally, the Youth Unit has established relationships with employers to secure jobs for young offenders on release. They also work with not for profit services so that relationships are established prior to release and can be continued to give the reintegration process the maximum chance of success.



Since 2001, over 400 such employees have joined Toll and 95% of these have remained free of re-offending and relapse. Currently 35 positions are made available each year for Second Steppers.

## Employment - Toll Second Step Program<sup>60</sup>

One company that partners with the Youth Unit and actively *discriminates* in favour of ex-offenders is Toll Pty Ltd, one of the world's biggest logistics and transport companies.

Toll runs the Second Step Program, which is designed to assist people who face barriers to employment. The focus is on the potential of the employee, rather than any impediments and limitations resulting from their problematic histories. The program caters for people with prior criminal records, long term unemployment and substance abuse and addiction-related issues. They are usually people who, because of their inability to secure work, are dependent on government welfare.

Since 2001, over 400 such employees have joined Toll and 95% of these have remained free of re-offending and relapse. Currently 35 positions are made available each year for Second Steppers.

*'Over the last 5 years we've literally seen miracles occur with people who have come out of prison and been able to turn their lives around to the point where they are outstanding individuals - for people who have had their share of no luck, giving them a chance has enabled them to completely change.'*

Paul Little, former Managing Director, Toll Pty Ltd

Second Step participants have proven to be loyal and dedicated employees, committed to learning new skills and persisting with their working lives. They have taken jobs including picking and packing, forklift and truck driving, administrative assistance, IT and in reception. Some have risen to what might have been considered extraordinary levels in the company and have made major contributions.

Prior to working with Second Step most of these people were written off by society. They struggled with substance abuse and addictions and, if not for Toll, they would be continuing to cycle through the crime/court/prison system. The reasons that the Second Step Program works both for them and for Toll are:

- Pre-employment preparation regarding skills acquisition and personal well being
- Integrated on-site mentoring
- Multidimensional clinical, social and legal support provided by community organisations linked with Toll

- Provision for paid leave to attend court, parole and health appointments
- The development of a new identity for the person with new roles and relationships
- The positive impact of the program on other staff in the company

Feedback from employees confirms that they are:

- Maintaining a job for the first time
- Enjoying a lengthy period of abstinence from substance abuse
- Securing a stable residence
- Paying regular rent
- Having money in the bank that they have earned and not stolen
- Obtaining dental work so they can 'smile again'
- Wearing clean clothes,
- Being proud to tell people what they do and showing their family they can make it in life.

This is a program delivering financial and social returns through long-term sustainable employment which also helps reduce reoffending.

Toll works with a small number of partner programs nationally and internationally who provide the pre-employment support and ongoing assistance to the participants. These include First Step<sup>61</sup>, a not for profit organisation providing wrap-around support (health, housing, legal and employment) for people suffering from addiction and Whitelion<sup>62</sup>, a not for profit organisation that supports at risk young people back into education and employment.

**First Step** is an integrated hub model that combines multi-dimensional treatment for substance abuse and addiction issues with legal support and mental health.

The services it offers include:

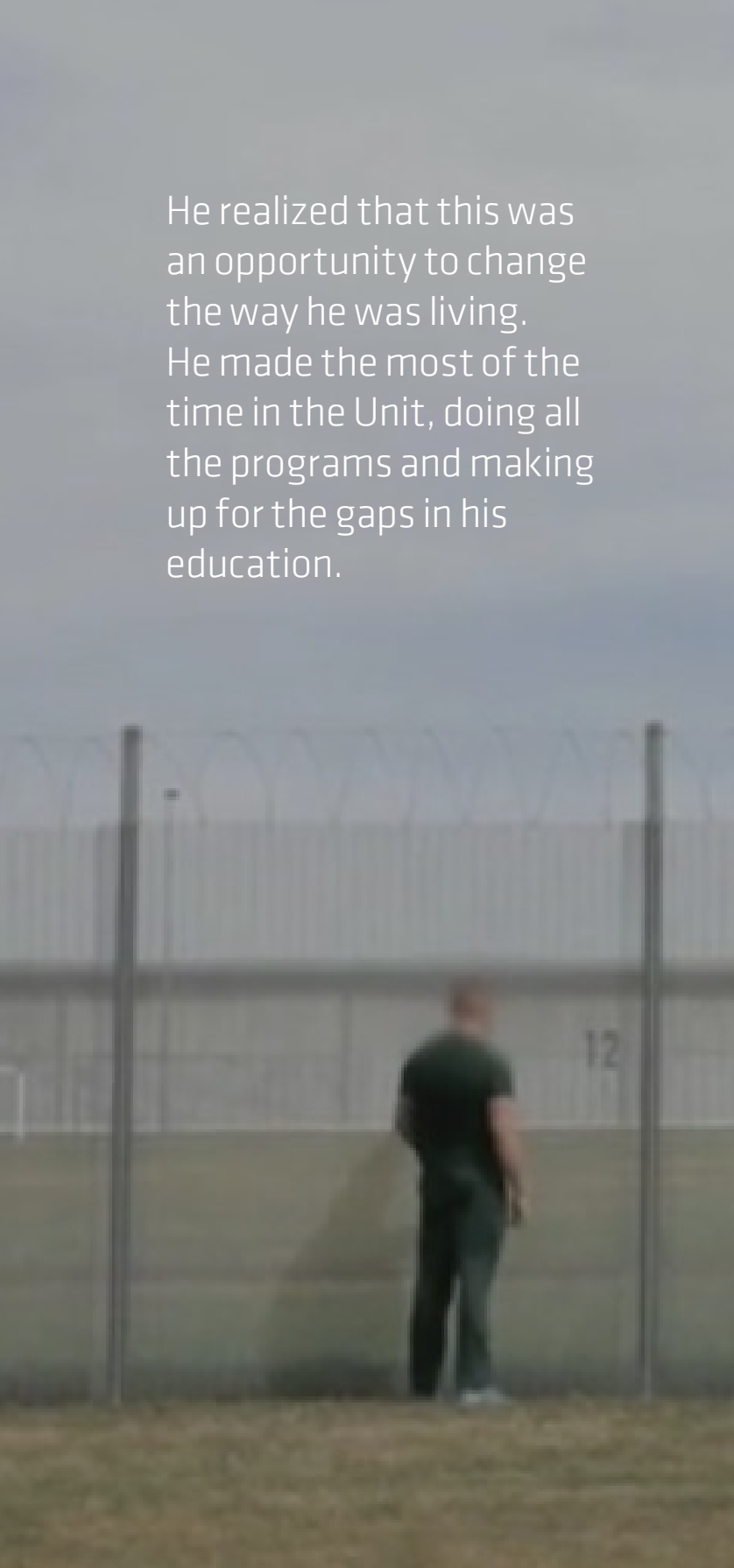
- General practitioners
- Addiction medicine specialists
- Mental health nurses
- Psychologists and counsellors
- Opiate replacement therapy
- Psychiatric assessment and treatment
- Legal
- Employment support

Similarly, Whitelion, a not for profit organisation working in Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania with young people at risk, is active in supporting young people while they are in prison and on release. While inside prison they are visited on a regular basis so that a trusting relationship with a worker is developed and continued when the person is released. The worker supports the emotional and educational needs while the person is in prison, building resilience, skills and a plan for release, then continues to work with them so that barriers to successful reintegration concerning family, employment and community are negotiated<sup>63</sup>.

Toll has a well developed Indigenous Engagement Program that

- Expands their knowledge and awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, traditions and culture through training and education.
- Ensures (where possible) that barriers to opportunities are addressed.
- Develops protocols and procedures for respectful engagement.
- Introduces training and employment programs in select businesses, which build on the learnings from the pilot programs.
- Provides procurement opportunities through membership with Supply Nation.
- Offers sponsorship and in-kind support.
- Introduces the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employee Network.
- Evaluates and reports on the effect of the Indigenous engagement progress.

This is a program delivering financial and social returns through long-term sustainable employment which also helps reduce reoffending.



He realized that this was an opportunity to change the way he was living. He made the most of the time in the Unit, doing all the programs and making up for the gaps in his education.

### **One life**

W was a young boy in Sydney who only knew his father as someone he visited in prison. His mother was an alcoholic and had mental health issues. By the time he was 14 and 9 months, the legal age to work, he had left home and was supporting himself, staying on friends' couches, in bus shelters, and trying to stay at school.

Unsurprisingly the pressures became too much and W dropped out of school and got more and more involved with drugs and crime. When he first went to prison at 18 he was comfortable in the familiar surroundings – he wasn't scared like the other first timers because he knew the place and having a father inside meant he would be protected. He did 3.5 years and came out determined to stay clean. But it wasn't so easy. He couldn't get a job because of his record and had nowhere secure to stay. He got back involved with drugs and crime and ended up in Victoria where he was convicted of armed robbery.

Because of his age, when he went to prison they put him in the Youth Unit, despite not being a first time offender. (Lack of data sharing between states often means that previous sentences are not known about.) W said that when he went to the Unit, into his cell, another prisoner came to him and asked, 'How are you travelling?' For W this was the first time someone had asked him that and actually meant it. He realized that this was an opportunity to change the way he was living. He made the most of the time in the Unit, doing all the programs and making up for the gaps in his education.

When he left the Unit he was employed by Toll. W now works for a youth agency supporting young people in situations like his own.

## Family and community

As indicated earlier, maintaining family relationship is recognised as a protective factor against reoffending. A new initiative in Tasmania and on trial at Port Phillip Prison is a video visits program using Skype technology. Not only has this system so far enabled people in prison to regularly meet up with their families on Skype, as per regular in-person visits; it has also facilitated virtual visits, including to a graveside so that a son in prison could see his father buried, a hospital bedside so a man could be with his mother in her dying hours and a maternity ward so that a young man could see his baby daughter as she took her first breaths.

In essence, the trial replaces the visit in person with a virtual visit. All security and cost barriers have been addressed and the program is running on a regular basis in both Risdon Prison, Hobart and Port Phillip Prison, Victoria. Regional locations that are recognised to house families of prisoners are established and volunteers recruited to manage visits by family members. Volunteers are trained regarding security and visits protocols. Prisoners and families book a visit as usual and each party uses a device that connects to Skype at a prearranged time.

Significant cost savings are made for both families and prison facilities. Travel time is eliminated and barriers including waiting times and harsh environments for children are removed. Additionally, remote locations become familiar places for families and places they can remain in contact with for ongoing support when the prisoner has been released. This part of the initiative is very significant and addresses the very real problems most ex-offenders face when they return to a community and have very little connection or even face hostility.

The two trials are going well. In Tasmania the prison is in Hobart and the regional locations are in Burnie, Launceston and soon Devonport will be added. Visits in each place are held once a week. In Victoria a regional location has been set up in Albury with new sites in Mildura and Traralgon developed for future visits.

In general prison authorities are happy with it and see growth benefitting them through cost reductions as the prison population rises and puts more pressure on current resources. The program is being run by Pastor Norm Reed who is based in Hobart and seed funding has been provided by Igniting Change. Norm is acting as the family liaison worker in essence.

This role is crucial in managing the logistics that the program relies on. It is also crucial in building up relationships between all the people involved, including between outside volunteers who staff the community centres and people in prison, between people in prison and their families and between community hubs and prison staff. This role is also critical in building links such that when the person is released from prison a smooth transition into the community is possible.

### Some feedback on the visits:

*The visit itself was quite impacting for J. Both the birth itself, and feeding, caused complications which J was coping with by herself without the support of her partner being physically there for her, by no fault of her own. Receiving the praise and affirmation that she did from him was so very important to this new mum and baby, and J then felt ready to let the rest of her support base know of the baby's birth, and to receive visits and help from them.*

*Following the visit as J was preparing to leave, a midwife, A, asked some questions about the video visits, and suggested that it could be helpful to contact the Nurse Unit Managers to arrange an in-service presentation about the service. As the conversation continued, J explained that she had felt she was treated differently by staff when they learned that her partner was in prison, and A acknowledged that some education around the experiences of new mothers in such situations could help staff to respond in a more helpful way. A also explained that this is a scenario that the maternity unit encounters reasonably frequently, and that midwives could be well placed to inform expectant mothers of this service, and to connect them with the support prior to delivery of their babies.*

Nurse, Launceston Hospital

*Today at about 16:00 C spoke to me about a 'Skype visit' which had just been facilitated. The usage of this medium as visits allowed him to see his son and partner for the first time since the birth on Monday. He was overjoyed and asked that I thank all those that assisted in any way for this to occur.*

*I feel strongly that this type of interaction involving out of prison stakeholders is an invaluable asset to have and ask that the process whenever considered for future Inmate use be positively considered - I see its use as an excellent management tool and as a cost effective means of providing support for persons either Inmate/s or another.*

Prison warden

*I would just like to let you know that K's grades have improved at school since she has had the opportunity to spend time studying with her father. K's last two maths quizzes have her getting 40/40 when she used to struggle to pass these quizzes. K is also more positive in herself now realising she can improve her grades if she works harder and puts in extra time with her homework. K is seeing her father in a positive light with her now saying 'I'll ask dad when he rings' if she is struggling with her homework when she would have usually hide her homework book and told us she did not have any homework. Thanks for making this possible for K.*

Mum

In essence, the trial replaces the visit in person with a virtual visit. All security and cost barriers have been addressed and the program is running on a regular basis in both Risdon Prison, Hobart and Port Phillip Prison, Victoria.

## Community attitudes

Perhaps the hardest thing to change is community attitudes.

One initiative that has significantly impacted on community attitudes is the Yellow Ribbon Program in Singapore<sup>64</sup>. Over the last ten years it has successfully challenged one of the world's most notoriously punitive prison systems so that it redefined the central role of the Singapore Prison Service; beyond being a mere custodian, it acts as an enduring catalyst to effectively rehabilitate and reintegrate offenders. The Yellow Ribbon program is part of the whole system that includes rehabilitative care in prison, employment support on release and communities giving prisoners a second chance. In the late 1990s Singapore was faced with rising prisoner numbers, high recidivism rates, poor public profile and unsustainably rising costs. The solution Singapore successfully implemented involved changing from punishment to rehabilitation, expanding employment opportunities on release and changing community attitudes to give prisoners a second chance so they were supported rather than marginalised on their release.

According to a recent visitor to Singapore, 'The yellow ribbon program here literally transformed the prison - they went from 40%+ recidivism rate - with plans to build a new prison cluster (i.e. 5,000 more prisoners) to reducing recidivism to 20%+. **In essence they transformed the prison staff from being custodial staff to captains of lives.** The statement is everywhere in the prison, on their letter heads, website etc - they have literally changed the way custodial staff relate to inmates.'<sup>65</sup>

## Philanthropy and social finance opportunities - Igniting Change

Significant innovations are being made in the field of philanthropy and social finance with increased focus on outcome evaluation, the inclusion of business principles and the development of strategic partnerships. Igniting Change is a leading example of the power of these emerging trends.

Igniting Change is a small organisation that's passionate about sparking big, positive changes for people facing difficulties in our communities. They listen and are guided by people who experience the issues; they connect unlikely experts to create new thinking and give a voice to people suffering from injustice and inequality. Igniting Change backs outstanding individuals and makes cutting edge investments to catalyse social change.

A very significant part of the work with young men at the Youth Unit has been funded over the last ten years by the work of Igniting Change. Additionally, Igniting Change seed funded the Skype visits program; in 2007 they took a number of business leaders to the Unit, including Toll's then Managing Director, Paul Little, leading directly to the partnership that endures today between the Unit and Toll Second Step Employment Program.

Through the support of Igniting Change, Port Phillip Prison has become home to one of the most innovative programs for young men in prison in Australia. Igniting Change has been supporting this ground-breaking program for nearly ten years. When they first met Youth Development Officer, Anne Hooker, in 2004, in the face of high suicide rates at the Prison, she had been granted the opportunity to start a youth unit with a new approach to the treatment of young adult offenders, but had no extra resources with which to do it. Igniting Change was inspired by her vision and determination to change the outcome for young men in prison and the wider community and began to build a relationship that has grown and strengthened over ten years.

The work of Igniting Change has included securing funds and in-kind support to run the personal development programs, to set up the T-shirt printing initiative, to film 'Stories from the Inside' and to support the post-release employment program.

Without this financial and in-kind support, the Youth Unit would not have been able to operate as it has. Most significantly, Igniting Change inspired and catalysed funding from AndyInc Foundation that was complemented by funds from the Department of Corrections to enable the evaluation of the Unit by Monash University which has provided the evidence to argue for the expansion of the program to the broader national community.

This type of social investment is a leading example of a new way of thinking about philanthropy. It is about social change that addresses the cause rather than the symptoms, that involves the investor in the lives of the recipients and the recipients in the design and implementation of the initiative. It is based on evidence and demand led.

There is an opportunity for more investors to get involved in this in prisons throughout Australia.

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‘When a young person who is considered disadvantaged or disconnected is given a job opportunity automatically this young person is given an opportunity to belong in a positive environment.

The feeling this gives the young person is second to none as most of these young people would be experiencing this sense of positive belonging for the first time. To a lot people they take this for granted but to people like myself I see the massive impact it has had in my life to have a positive place to belong’



**A young man** who was in the Youth Unit and employed by Toll on release.



## Part 3: Taking action

This section describes how change can be made. It articulates the importance of different sections of the community working together and draws together knowledge and experience of people connected with prisons, community organisations, philanthropists and government.

### Cost savings relative to reductions in recidivism

Research by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research on the effects of reducing recidivism on imprisonment rates reveals that modest reductions in the rates at which offenders are re-imprisoned would result in considerable savings in prisoner numbers and correctional outlays. Comparable reductions in the number of newly sentenced prisoners also produces benefits but these are smaller<sup>66</sup>.

**Most significantly it finds that current mainstream intervention programs are proving ineffective, but that they can improve outcomes if lessons learned are adopted from effective programs and greater account is taken of the evidence generated by these programs and their evaluation.**

Analysis of the NSW prison population of 3,260 in 2008 shows that:

- A 10% reduction in the re-imprisonment rate reduces the sentenced prison population by 829 inmates at a saving of \$28 million pa
- A 10% reduction in newly sentenced prisoners would reduce the prison population by 673 inmates and save about \$23 million pa
- A 10% reduction in re-imprisonment of indigenous offenders would reduce costs by \$10 million pa
- A 10% reduction in new sentenced indigenous offenders would reduce costs by only \$4 million pa
- A 20% reduction in new sentenced indigenous offenders would reduce costs by less than a 10% reduction in re-imprisonment of current offenders
- This can be extended to any sub-group with a high rate of reoffending i.e. young adults (although statistics are distinct for each sub-group)
- Time in prison is controlled by government far more than time before prison; the way governments deal with offenders while in custody or after release can have a big effect on the rate of return to custody and therefore the size of the prison population
- Reducing re-offending depends upon the effectiveness of rehabilitation and reintegration post release programs that must be initiated pre-release

These findings clearly show that very significant savings that can be made by reducing re-offending rates and while they are specific to New South Wales, they can be used as a guide on which to develop the expansion of the Youth Unit model, nationally. A full cost-benefit analysis of the Youth Unit at Port Phillip Prison has not been undertaken, however, additional costs are estimated to be minimal compared to the savings that would result from a reduction in re-offending of 20% that has been shown in the Monash evaluation<sup>67</sup>.

## Expanding the Youth Unit model

Implementation of Youth Units into the correctional facilities of each state and territory would need to be undertaken according to the specific needs of each jurisdiction. The best practice summary (page 16) provides a guide to working with young adult offenders. Using the Port Phillip Prison Youth Unit as a model, the following provides a framework for further implementation.

### Physical space

A Youth Unit needs to operate in a separate physical space within a prison; this does not mean prisoners are isolated at all times from older prisoners, as they do encounter them as they move around the prison, but it does mean that they are housed separately and not living with older prisoners. Ideally the unit would provide single cells, but this does not need to be a limiting factor in overcrowded facilities.

### Staff

#### Youth Development Officer

The key person in the Youth Unit is the Youth Development Officer. At Port Phillip Prison, this position is held by Anne Hooker, who founded the Youth Unit and has guided its development over the last 14 years. With the endorsement of G4S and Corrections Victoria, she and two additionally trained correctional staff operate the 35-bed Youth Unit.

While a programmatic framework has been established and can be replicated, the essential requirement of the Youth Development Officer (and all staff) is a passion for young people and a belief in their potential to change. In order to implement the practice nation-wide, a number of suitably oriented and qualified people would have to be identified and trained in the skills developed at the Youth Unit; drawing heavily on the expertise and guidance of Anne Hooker.

While the staff at the Youth Unit can be drawn from the correctional staff of the prison, they also need to have a positive attitude towards young people in these circumstances and to undergo additional training in the theory and practice of the Unit.

Additionally, **program and educational staff** need to be engaged as required to fulfil the personal development, educational and training objectives. Resources already deployed in rehabilitation programs could be built upon to deliver these programs, for example, TAFE programs already in place.

Ideally, staff would also include a **family liaison and an employment worker**, both of whom would most likely be working through a not for profit organisation based in the community. Both would be involved in working with the inmates while in prison to assist in preparation for release and continue this relationship on release so as to provide the wrap around support to ensure successful reintegration into the community with family and employment, which in turn mitigates against the risks of repeat offending.

### Social Enterprise

The T-shirt printing social enterprise is a key feature of the Youth Unit at Port Phillip Prison and this, or other similar enterprises, should be included in the development of all further Units. This unique element gives an opportunity for the young men to put into real life practice the changes they learn about in theory. This is a defining feature of the Unit and critical to its success.

Estimated additional resources required to run the Youth Unit:

- Youth Development Officer
- Training and supervision of correctional staff
- Delivery of programs (other than by Unit staff)
- Employer relationships manager for each Unit
- Family liaison manager for each Unit (includes running Skype program)
- Monitoring and evaluation

### Funding

Despite the success of the Unit and the projected reoffending reductions, with current pressures and funding over-runs, the chance of government or private prison operators funding extra Youth Units is unlikely. Philanthropic support of prison-related issues is limited. Funding that is provided is often short term and limited by lack of evidence.

In the expansion of the Youth Units, a broader range and mix of funding from philanthropic donations to impact investment needs to be explored. This could include funding:

- that is as a catalyst and strategically leverages other resources;
- that supports innovation;
- that supports evaluation so that an evidence base is established;
- that is long term so that new initiatives or paradigms can be tested, evaluated and developed;
- that is demand-led with initiatives inspired by the people experiencing the issues;
- that results in reduced program costs otherwise anticipated with these savings contributing to ongoing sustainability;
- that supports initiatives that have the potential to generate income as well as social benefits;
- that promotes collaboration between organisations that might traditionally be competing for funding;
- that is directed towards advocacy to use program evidence to influence policy change.

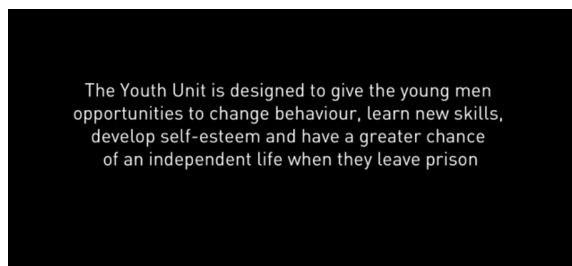
Regarding the Youth Unit, philanthropic funding spear-headed by Igniting Change<sup>68</sup> has supported the innovation and evaluation, has been long-term, demand-led, flexibly adapted to the program development and supportive of collaboration between the prison, business and not for profits.

Replication on a national scale will require investment at each site in each state and territory that is driven by local conditions. Options for funding include:

- Philanthropy that provides seed funding for programs that can be funded by government when outcomes are established;
- Impact investing such as social impact bonds that return capital and interest to investors on the basis of cost savings to government;
- Business investment whereby financial investment in Youth Unit initiatives return a steady, reliable, supported workforce, (incorporated with government supported apprenticeships);
- Investment in social enterprises that are run within the Units and could contribute to the operational costs;

## Evaluation

Evaluation is essential to the expansion of the Youth Unit model. The purpose of Youth Units is to reduce re-offending and impact positively on imprisonment rates, so data collection and analysis are essential. Ideally this would be done under controlled conditions such that a randomly selected group of young adult offenders was placed in the Youth Unit and outcomes compared to a group not selected from the same cohort. This type of evaluation is difficult for many reasons, and expensive, and it is unlikely that it would be possible in the current climate. At the least, though, there should be sufficient investment in data collection and analysis that tracks the progress of every young adult in the Youth Unit while inside, and for a minimum of two years on release.



# Call to action

## Government



Bipartisan commitment to support state and territory correctional departments to incorporate Youth Units as per the model at Port Phillip Prison into the prison systems in each state and territory such that young offenders serve their time within Units that are safe and focus on rehabilitation and successful reintegration into community.



## Business



Having a job is one of the key determinants that stops a person re-offending. Safer and stronger communities make for stronger business.

### Call to action:

Create employment opportunities for people who have been in prison; partner with the Youth Unit; work with not for profit agencies to mentor young people released from prison and support successful ongoing employment, as in the case of Toll Second Step Program.



## Philanthropy and social finance



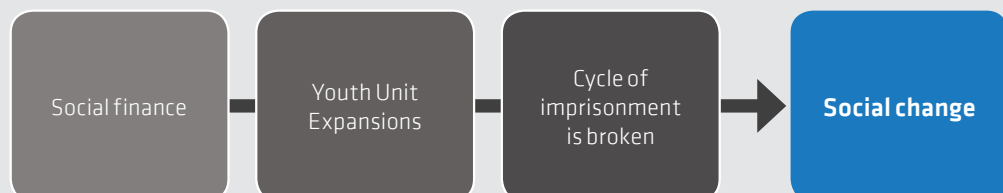
Current programs and funding frameworks are not solving entrenched social issues; they are often short term, without an evidence base and unsustainable; prison budgets are running over and resistant to change.

### Call to action

Provide social finance that supports innovation and evaluation, is long term, demand led, flexible and adaptive, supports collaboration between government, business and not for profits and systemic social change.

Explore options for expansion of the Youth Units in all states and territories that respond to local conditions and include:

- Philanthropy that provides seed funding for programs to be funded by government when outcomes are established
- Impact investing such as social impact bonds that return capital and interest to investors on the basis of cost savings to government
- Business investment whereby financial investment in Youth Unit initiatives return a steady, reliable, supported workforce, (incorporated with government supported apprenticeships)
- Investment in social enterprises that are run within the Units and could contribute to the operational costs.

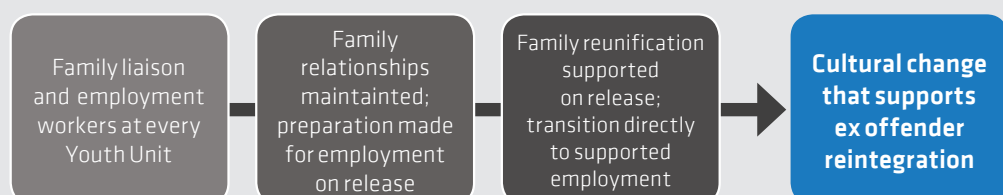


## Not for Profit and community



### Call to action

Provide family and employment liaison workers to work with offenders pre and post release to ensure sustained family relationships and successful and ongoing employment. Build cultural change such that people leaving prison are given a second chance rather than vilified forever by the community, never to break the cycle of incarceration.



'I went into prison work because I wanted to make a difference, but in a few years, the ideals were beaten out of me. When I discovered the Youth Unit, I found a purpose again – we really do make a difference and change young lives.'

# THE YOUTH UNIT



**Prison Guard**

Port Phillip Prison Youth Unit

# Conclusion

In preparing this report it became clear that many people working within the prison systems in Australia are frustrated and disillusioned with their ineffectiveness, costliness and ultimate futility. Frustration concerning lack of evaluation and evidence based program implementation is also widespread.

This investigation seeks to use evidence to provide a way forward at least in part in a system that is steeped in tradition and resistant to change. It advocates not for being soft on crime, but rather, for being smart. It does not excuse the heinous actions that have led many people in prison to be there nor diminish the impacts their crimes have had and have forever more on their victims. Rather, it calls for change so that criminal activity is reduced with the ultimate aim being for no more victims.

# My jail time 2014





# Endnotes

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4. Recidivism can be defined and measured in a number of ways. Limitations and lack of availability of administrative data mean that information for age specific cohorts that could inform analysis of re-offending activity is not available in standard government statistical data sets; however, limited analyses can be found in specific research projects. For a discussion on current research, analysis and trends on recidivism in general, see AIC Recidivism in Australia: Findings and Future Trends 2007, Jason Payne. This paper instances one study that identifies the likelihood of a person being rearrested within ten years of release from prison to be 61% for a non-Indigenous male offender aged between 18 and 21 (88% for Indigenous); 45% and 82% for those aged between 21 and 25. Who Returns to Prison? Patterns of reoffending among prisoners released from custody in Victoria in 2002 - 2003 finds that the almost 60% of 17 - 20 year olds returned to prison within two years of release. While this is not current, it provides some guide and also concurs with anecdotal accounts which consistently identify young male adults as having the highest rates of re-offending.
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## Stephanie Exton, Author

Stephanie Exton occupies a distinctive position in the Australian philanthropic and non-profit sectors. She works first-hand with initiatives that approach deeply entrenched social issues in original ways, and in holding executive positions in philanthropy\*, she also has the potential and scope to forge working relationships and broker ongoing support from a wide range of people.

Her approach is underpinned by the passion and integrity she developed as a professional cellist, directed by the discipline of her work in journalism, founded on her forbearance and devotion as a mother of four, and informed by tertiary research and 14 years of experience in the Australian non-profit and philanthropic sectors. These insights allow her to conduct research with unparalleled empathy and discernment, which takes into account both the practical characteristics of each social issue she faces, and the depth of the personal suffering that her work seeks to remedy.

\* Stephanie is Executive Officer with the George Hicks Foundation and the Sir Andrew and Lady Fairley Foundation and between 2005 and 2012 worked at Igniting Change where she first found her passion for seeing change in the Justice system.

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