

better pathways
in practice

Phoenix Rising 2005 – Artwork courtesy Glynnis

the women's correctional services framework



an initiative of *better pathways*:
*an integrated response to
women's offending and
re-offending* – a four year
strategy to address the increase
in women's imprisonment in
victoria 2005–2009.

DEPARTMENT
OF JUSTICE





Phoenix Rising, 2005

Oil on canvas board

'This picture was done at a particularly pivotal point of my journey in here. I had reached the halfway point of my sentence, and it was very profound, very real. Everything was magnified, and it was a transitional period for me. The only way I could relate it was to remember that in 2000 we had really bad fire storms back home, and after days of burning, these amazing red flowers grew through the ashes. They were

very obscure looking, but their beauty was so symbolic of relief, and symbolised my own sense of transition and catharsis.'

Glynis, South African. Artwork produced as part of Somebody's Daughter Theatre Inc. art classes at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre.

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Commissioner's Foreword

I am delighted to introduce *Better Pathways in Practice*: the Women's Correctional Services Framework, a policy statement which describes Corrections Victoria's progressive approach to the delivery of correctional services to women.

With women comprising a small minority of individuals under the supervision of correctional services, it is an ongoing challenge for correctional practitioners worldwide to respond effectively to their needs in an environment designed primarily to manage males.

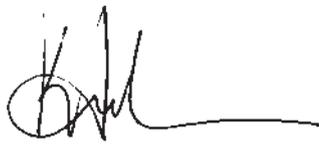
Over the years, Corrections Victoria has advanced considerably in its ability to provide a differentiated response to women, with numerous policies and practices being modified over the years in recognition of the specific needs of women.

In November 2005, the Victorian government launched the strategy *Better Pathways: An Integrated Response to Women's Offending and Re-offending*. This strategy further articulated Corrections Victoria's commitment to addressing the needs of women prisoners and offenders through a \$25.5million, cross-government strategy incorporating a range of initiatives around policy development, program and service delivery, infrastructure, workforce training and development and research.

The Women's Correctional Services Framework, an initiative of *Better Pathways*, provides a structure with which to sustain such developments in the longer term. As a blueprint for the delivery of correctional services to women, it will assist staff working across corrections to respond more effectively to the needs of women in prison and supervised by Community Correctional Services. It also provides Corrections Victoria with an evidence-based foundation on which to build a correctional services system that is wholly gender specific in its approach.

The support and engagement of staff across the organisation is critical to the successful implementation of the Women's Correctional Services Framework. I would encourage all staff whose work may impact on women prisoners and/or offenders to take a proactive approach to its implementation, to ensure its translation into operational practice.

I welcome this exciting opportunity for Corrections Victoria to develop a correctional system that provides better outcomes for women offenders and their families, correctional staff and the broader community.



KELVIN ANDERSON
Commissioner
August 2007

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank all those who provided input and assistance into the development of this document.

The breadth of information it contains would not have been possible without the ideas and insight contributed by a wide range of individuals, including Corrections Victoria head office and regional staff, women residing in the Women's Prisons Region and under the supervision of Community Correctional Services, correctional staff from other jurisdictions and the members of the Women's Correctional Services Advisory Committee.

Thank you all for your assistance with this project.

better pathways in practice

the women's correctional services framework

Mission statement: Corrections Victoria is committed to providing a progressive model of service delivery and appropriate correctional intervention that responds effectively to women's distinct needs, characteristics, life experiences and family circumstances.

Guiding principles:

- Strengthening relationships
- Addressing varied and complex needs
- Providing respect and safety
- Creating opportunities
- Supporting continuity
- Responding to diversity
- Informed by best practice

Operational Objectives:

Delivery of correctional services for women

Design of programs for women offenders

Offender management practices for women

Workforce recruitment, training and development

Correctional policy and planning

PART ONE

Introducing the Women's Correctional Services Framework

What is the Women's Correctional Services Framework?

The Women's Correctional Services Framework ('the Framework') is a unifying policy statement that will guide the future development and delivery of correctional services to women prisoners and offenders. It is an initiative of *Better Pathways: An Integrated Response to Women's Offending and Re-offending*, a four year strategy to address the number of women in prison in Victoria by implementing a range of initiatives to reduce women's offending, imprisonment, re-offending and victimisation.

The Framework describes a model for the delivery of correctional services that takes into account the distinct needs, characteristics, life experiences and family circumstances of women offenders within broader offender management practice. It incorporates a mission statement, a set of guiding principles and operational objectives to address service delivery, program design, offender management, workforce development and correctional policy and planning. The Framework also includes a workplan identifying 30 projects to be delivered over the two years to June 2009.

The overarching aim of the Framework is to improve the 'gender responsiveness' of Victoria's adult correctional services system, to improve outcomes for women prisoners, women under the supervision of Community Correctional Services (CCS) and women under the supervision of the Home Detention Program. A broader benefit to the families of women offenders and to the broader community is anticipated.

Why a Gender Responsive Approach?

'Gender responsiveness' describes an approach to service delivery that acknowledges and addresses the distinct needs and life experiences of the gender of the individual to whom services are provided. The term does not imply that the needs of men and women are totally discrete and should be provided for separately. It does, however, suggest that gender is an important consideration in the design and delivery of correctional programs.

The primary argument in favour of a distinct approach to women offenders is that men and women are different, and therefore respond differently to correctional intervention. By

acknowledging gender differences and integrating them into operational and management practices, correctional services can be more effective in meeting the needs of women offenders and, critically, reducing their re-offending.

To effectively address women's offending behaviour it is necessary to ensure a co-ordinated approach to the design and delivery of policies, programs, services and other interventions for women prisoners and offenders that reflect their distinct needs, characteristics, life experiences and family circumstances.

In Victoria, examples already exist of correctional services being adapted in acknowledgement of the different needs of women. For example, in acknowledgement of women's prevalence as primary carers, a residential program for young children has been in operation in the Women's Prisons Region for many years. Further, women under the supervision of CCS are routinely advised of their entitlement to be supervised by a female officer. These responses have been made in the context of a corrections system that has been designed to respond to male offenders. The development of a unifying policy framework that examines the corrections system from a gender specific perspective is an important step to sustain these and other initiatives, and to develop new responses in the longer term.

Gender Differences in Victoria's Prisoner and CCS Offender Populations

In addition to an understanding that a gender specific approach can be more effective in addressing women's offending, the significant increase in the number of women in prison in Victoria has been an impetus for Corrections Victoria to develop a specific policy response to the needs of women. Since 1995, the number of women in prison in Victoria has more than doubled, including an 84% increase between 1998 and 2003 which was more than triple the growth in the male prisoner population over the same period.

In response to this increase, Corrections Victoria developed a detailed evidence base identifying the current and emerging needs of women prisoners and offenders. This included an analysis of the drivers of the increase in the female prison population, a comparative analysis of the profile of

male and female prisoners and offenders on community corrections orders in Victoria, and a comprehensive review of effective correctional interventions for women. This work demonstrated that there are significant differences between women and men who come in contact with the criminal justice system¹, for example:

- *frequency and seriousness of offending* – women commit fewer and less serious crimes than men and are more likely to be convicted of crimes involving property or drugs which are motivated by poverty, gambling and/or substance abuse;
- *drug influence* – the severity of women's drug use is more closely related to their offending than it is for men – i.e. women are more likely to have committed their offence(s) while under the influence of drugs or to support their drug use;
- *relationships through which offending behaviour develops* – women's offending often develops through relationships with family members, friends and significant others (eg. partners, support networks and colleagues) rather than the concept of 'peer associates' which is commonly cited as a risk factor for men;
- *response to community supervision, incarceration and treatment* – women respond best to relationship-focused and holistic responses which address many of their needs simultaneously;
- *dependent care responsibilities* – women offenders are heavily influenced by their responsibilities and concerns for their dependent children;
- *prevalence of victimisation* – more women than men experience sexual, physical and psychological abuse and these experiences appear to contribute to women's criminality and shape their patterns of offending; and
- *mental illness, substance abuse and trauma* – the complex impact of mental illness, substance abuse and trauma is integral to women's offending, with higher rates of all three factors among women than for men.

Notwithstanding a subpopulation of violent, dangerous women, female offenders are generally a higher need, lower risk² offender group than men. In addition, although women and men share some criminogenic needs (i.e. treatment targets associated with reducing re-offending), research indicates that women also have some distinct needs linked to their offending behaviour that relate to issues such as past victimisation, child rearing responsibilities and self esteem.

It is also important to note recent trends in the population of women coming into contact with the corrections system. For example, in recent years there has been a significant increase in the number of Vietnamese women in prison custody, as well as an ageing of the women prisoner and offender populations. Further, the impact of broader criminal justice policy is impacting on this population, with trends such as an increased number of women imprisoned for violent and sexual offences being observed.

Operational Implications

There are a number of operational challenges that have been identified by staff working with women prisoners and offenders which relate to the differences noted above, and have implications for the way they are managed. For example women:

- undertake shorter periods of supervision, meaning less opportunity for intervention;
- are more likely to expose their vulnerability, talk about problems and ask for help;
- have a tendency to share issues and become involved in the problems of others;
- may display violent or aggressive behaviour differently to men, often with an emotional basis;
- demonstrate a greater demand for access to health services, including prescription drugs, for a range of issues.

A further challenge for the corrections system is the relatively small number of women under its supervision. Despite the recent increase in the

1 See for example:

- Ward, L. (2003) *Effective Community Based Programs for Women Offenders: An Evidence Based Review*, report prepared for Corrections Victoria, unpublished; and
- Bloom, B, Owen, B, Covington, S (2003) *Gender-Responsive Strategies: Research, Practice, and Guiding Principles for Women Offenders*, Washington, DC: National Institute of Corrections.

2 The term 'risk' is used here to refer to perceived risks to security/the community as determined by a risk assessment process, not the risk of re-offending.

female prison population, women comprise less than seven per cent of the total Victorian prison population³. Accommodation options for the Women's Prisons Region are constrained with only two facilities – the maximum security Dame Phyllis Frost Centre and the minimum security HM Prison Tarrengower.

The Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (DPFC) houses the majority of women prisoners. It operates as a multi functional facility which accommodates prisoners of all security ratings and includes mainstream, protection and management prisoners. Such an environment is not reflected anywhere else in the prison system, and creates a further degree of complexity in the management of women prisoners.

Within CCS, a major challenge is the lack of a 'critical mass' of women offenders. Women comprise less than one fifth of the total offender population under CCS supervision⁴, spread across approximately 50 office locations across Victoria. The relatively small number of women reporting to any one location can limit options for suitable community work placements as well as the ability to run group-based intervention programs.

It is critical that Corrections Victoria develop innovative service delivery methods in response to these operational challenges, guided by the policy directives outlined in the Framework.

Corrections Victoria Policy Context

Corrections Victoria's mission is to deliver a safe and secure corrections system that actively engages offenders and the community to promote positive behaviour change. The policies outlined below support this mission through a focus on strategies to improve rehabilitation outcomes for offenders under correctional supervision.

Better Pathways: An Integrated Response to Women's Offending and Re-offending

The Women's Correctional Services Framework is a key initiative of the strategy *Better Pathways: An Integrated Response to Women's Offending and Re-offending*. *Better Pathways* is a four year

strategy (2005–2009) to address the increase in women's imprisonment, consisting of 37 initiatives to reduce women's offending, imprisonment, re-offending and victimisation. Of these initiatives:

- 28 are targeted *strategy deliverables* to be implemented by June 2009; and
- nine are proposed *future directions* for action over the medium to longer term.

The *Better Pathways* initiatives address a range of needs shared by women at risk of offending and re-offending. These relate to mental health, substance abuse, children and family ties, physical health, sexual assault, family violence, housing, education and training, employment, debt and gambling, and transport. The proposals include policy development, program and service delivery, infrastructure projects, workforce training and development, and research. A full list of *Better Pathways* initiatives can be found at **Attachment 1**.

The Framework will assist in meeting the aims and objectives of the *Better Pathways* strategy by enhancing the gender responsiveness of Victoria's correctional services system, to reduce the risk of re-offending among women prisoners and offenders.

Corrections Long Term Management Strategy

The Corrections Long Term Management Strategy (CLTMS) commenced in 2001, when the Government allocated funds over four years to curb the current and projected growth in Victoria's prison population.

In addition to building new and improved prison facilities to meet the projected need, the focus of CLTMS has been on introducing an extensive program of rehabilitation and diversion to reduce the prison population. Some of these initiatives have included:

- development of an Offender Management Framework (OMF) to enable consistent and evidence-based offender management practices;
- introduction of evidence based offending behaviour and cognitive skills programs that target criminogenic needs;
- a major redevelopment of CCS, including increasing capacity and developing greater

3 As at 30 June 2006, women represented approximately six per cent of the Victorian prison population.

4 As at 30 June 2006, women represented 17 per cent of offenders under CCS supervision.

specialisation in order to increase the up-take of non-custodial sentencing options;

- improved bail advocacy and support services to improve early intervention and increase the likelihood of defendants securing bail; and
- improved transitional support, including housing and employment pilots, to prepare prisoners for release and assist in their reintegration into the community.

Many CLTMS initiatives have received positive evaluation outcomes. Since the commencement of CLTMS there has been an overall decrease in the rate of recidivism among prisoners and offenders. Corrections Victoria aims to build on this success through improved co-ordination of existing programs and services and providing a differentiated response that targets special needs groups.

The current Framework will contribute to this activity by improving responsiveness of proven programs and services to better meet the needs of women prisoners and offenders.

Offender Management Framework

The OMF was developed as a key component of the CLTMS⁵. It provides four practice principles, underpinned by the 'what works' theoretical principles of integrity, risk, need and responsibility. These practice principles are to:

- *maintain system integrity* by developing practices that will ensure that what is introduced and delivered remains as it was planned and designed so that it meets its objectives;
- *manage risk and target intervention needs* by developing practices that will accurately identify risk/needs and appropriate intensity of intervention;
- *increase self responsibility* by developing practices that facilitate learning in an individual and subsequently lead to behaviour change; and
- *provide a constructive environment* by developing practices that ensure that the staff and setting characteristics promote, support and engage prisoners in behaviour change.

The OMF informs the way Corrections Victoria engages prisoners and offenders to elicit positive behaviour change and reduce the risk of re-offending. Its theoretical and practice principles are therefore fundamental to the delivery of correctional services. The Women's Correctional Services Framework is underpinned by these principles, and describes an approach to offender management that will contribute to the broader aims of the OMF by responding to the needs of women prisoners and offenders.

Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities

The Victorian *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* has been developed to ensure that declared human rights are taken into account in administrative and judicial decision making and the development of new laws. These rights include the right to privacy; freedom of thought, religion and belief, freedoms of expression, association and assembly; and the right to humane treatment when deprived of liberty.

The Charter has significant practical implications for Corrections Victoria in relation to its approach to the safe and humane treatment of prisoners and offenders. To ensure compliance with the Charter, Corrections Victoria will review all legislation, regulations, policy and procedures and make amendments as necessary⁶.

The Women's Correctional Services Framework will work along side Corrections Victoria's policy responses to the Charter, to ensure human rights are reviewed in the context of gender specific considerations.

Developing the Women's Correctional Services Framework

A conceptual diagram of the methodology informing the development of the Framework is attached at *Figure 1*.

The Framework has been informed by an analysis of a range of legislative and policy instruments relevant

5 The development of the OMF has been informed by the *Reducing Re-offending Framework: Setting the Scene* (revised January 2004), which describes Corrections Victoria's service delivery model for assessing, treating and managing offenders to capitalise on opportunities to reduce their risk of re-offending.

6 The Charter will come into operation on 1 January 2007, with its obligation on public authorities, including Corrections Victoria, and the powers of the courts commencing on 1 January 2008.

Figure 1 – Development of the Women’s Correctional Services Framework



to the development of a correctional system that responds effectively to the needs of women.

In particular, the Framework has drawn upon the existing evidence base developed for the *Better Pathways* strategy, including a comprehensive review of effective correctional responses for women offenders and a detailed statistical profile of women prisoners and offenders in Victoria. A review of best practice strategic and programmatic responses from other jurisdictions was also undertaken as part of the Strategy.

The Framework's guiding principles and operational objectives have been developed in light of this analysis and through broad consultation with key stakeholders, including Corrections Victoria head office staff, staff and service providers working in the Women's Prisons Region, CCS staff, community based agencies and women prisoners and offenders.

A review of relevant standards, policy and procedures currently in operation in Victoria's corrections system was undertaken in the context of the Framework principles and objectives. Through this and the consultation process described above, opportunities were identified for improvements to particular aspects of correctional service provision for women. In response, a workplan has been developed to progress these issues as priority projects in the short term, to improve the gender responsiveness of the corrections system.

Governance for the project has been provided by the *Better Pathways* Project Board, including senior representation from Strategic and Financial Services, CCS, the Women's Prisons Region and Infrastructure Services.

Non-government stakeholder input has come from the Women's Correctional Services Advisory Committee, which provides expert advice to the Minister for Corrections on the delivery of correctional services to women.

Structure of the Women's Correctional Services Framework

The Framework includes the following components:

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement articulates Corrections Victoria's commitment to the delivery of correctional services that respond to women's gender specific needs.

Guiding Principles

The seven Guiding Principles shape the Framework's philosophy for a correctional services system that is responsive to the distinct profile of women prisoners and offenders. This section includes a statement of why each principle is important and provides examples of what each could mean in practice.

Operational Objectives

Informed by the Guiding Principles, the Operational Objectives provide more detailed instructions on how to respond effectively to women's needs in the:

- delivery of correctional services to women;
- design of programs for women offenders;
- offender management practices for women;
- workforce recruitment, training and development; and
- correctional policy and planning.

Workplan for Priority Projects

The Workplan for Priority Projects ('the Workplan') describes 30 projects identified as critical to the Framework's aim of improving the gender responsiveness of correctional services to achieve better outcomes for women prisoners and women under the supervision of CCS and the Home Detention Program.

Further, building on the aims and objectives of the *Better Pathways* strategy, the priority projects included in the Workplan are each classified under one of the relevant four key themes identified in *Better Pathways*:

- Reducing women’s offending⁷;
- Reducing women’s imprisonment;
- Reducing women’s re-offending; and
- Reducing women’s victimisation.

The Workplan incorporates, where relevant, work to progress *Better Pathways* initiatives that have a specific focus on the delivery of correctional services.

For each project, the Workplan identifies the rationale, projected outcome/s, output/s, the responsible agency/s and the timelines for delivery.

Delivering the Women’s Correctional Services Framework

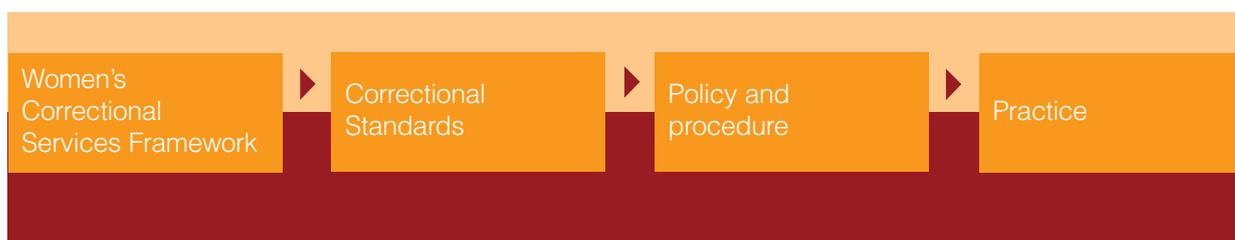
Where does it fit?

The Framework is an overarching policy statement which guides all correctional standards, policies and procedures that affect women under prison or community based correctional supervision. It describes a model for the delivery of correctional services that is responsive to the needs of women, and is broadly aligned with the theoretical and practice principles articulated by the OMF. As indicated in *Figure 2*, the Framework approach has been informed by the theoretical principle of internal responsivity, which refers to the delivery of programs and services that respond to individual factors such as learning style, motivation, gender and culture.

Figure 2 – Relationship between Offender Management Framework and Women’s Correctional Services Framework



Figure 3 – Hierarchy of Corrections Victoria guidelines



7 The aim of 'reducing offending' highlights the cross-government commitment under *Better Pathways* to address prevention and early intervention in relation to offending behaviour. While outside the scope of the correctional services system, there is an opportunity for Corrections Victoria to contribute to this aim through undertaking research on relevant 'at risk' populations entering the corrections system.

Figure 3 describes where the Framework fits in relation to the hierarchy of documents guiding the delivery of correctional services in Victoria. It can be considered an overarching policy framework which informs correctional standards, policy and procedure (e.g. Commissioner's Requirements and Director's Instructions) and, ultimately, all aspects of correctional practice.

The Framework is relevant to all staff of Corrections Victoria and all service providers contracted in the development, implementation, delivery and evaluation of programs and services which impact on women prisoners, women offenders under the supervision of CCS and/or women supervised by the Home Detention Program.

What does it mean?

All new policies, programs or procedures that will impact on women prisoners, women under the supervision of CCS and/or women under the supervision of the Home Detention Program are required to be compliant with the principles and objectives outlined in this Framework. This includes any review or amendments to existing correctional programs or services.

The Workplan has identified 30 specific projects to be addressed in the next three years to improve the responsiveness of correctional services to women.

The Framework also provides an opportunity to broadly educate staff about the needs and characteristics of women offenders and best practice responses to these, to incorporate a gendered approach in everyday practice.

Timelines for implementation

The Framework comes into effect immediately as a tool to influence the development of policy and procedure across Corrections Victoria.

The Workplan is scheduled to be completed by 30 June 2009, in line with the timeline for delivery of *Better Pathways* strategy deliverables.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Progress in relation to the implementation of the Framework and Workplan will be monitored through regular reporting to the *Better Pathways* Project Board.

Evaluation of the Framework will occur as part of the broader evaluation of the *Better Pathways* strategy, to determine its success in addressing the increase in women's imprisonment. This evaluation will be conducted at three levels to assess:

- whether the overall strategy itself was effective;
- whether the mix of initiatives represented the best approach to reducing re-offending and reducing prison numbers; and
- whether the individual initiatives were effective.

Both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods will be used and the evaluation is scheduled to commence later in the 2006/07 financial year.

PART TWO

Better Pathways in Practice: The Women's Correctional Services Framework

Mission Statement

Corrections Victoria is committed to providing a progressive model of service delivery and appropriate correctional intervention that responds effectively to women's distinct needs, characteristics, life experiences and family circumstances.

Guiding Principles

The following seven overarching principles identify concepts that are critical to developing a correctional service system that understands and responds to the distinct profile of women offenders. These guiding principles shape the philosophy that reflects Corrections Victoria's commitment to addressing women's re-offending through a holistic approach to service delivery that is responsive to the needs of all women under its supervision:

- Strengthening relationships;
- Addressing varied and complex needs;
- Providing respect and safety;
- Creating opportunities;
- Supporting continuity;
- Responding to diversity; and
- Informed by best practice.

The principles focus on issues that have been identified as important in the context of the distinct profile of women prisoners and offenders. Due to the interrelated nature of these issues, the principles incorporate a degree of overlap and should be considered holistically.

Basic human rights and broader offender management principles relevant to correctional practice are outlined in Corrections Victoria's Offender Management Framework, which uses evidence-based theoretical and practice principles to guide the management of offenders across the corrections system.

The principles are described in detail below, with additional information on why they are important and examples of how they might operate in practice.

Strengthening Relationships

Correctional services for women acknowledge the importance of relationships in women's lives and promote healthy connections with children, family

and friends, correctional practitioners and community based support networks that integrate effectively with broader rehabilitation objectives.

♀ *A major gender difference evident in the way women respond to correctional intervention reflects the centrality of children and child care responsibilities, family and other relationships in women's lives. Women's need to establish and maintain relationships, in both personal and professional contexts, is critical to their ability to address offending behaviour.*

In practice this can mean:

- Incorporating an offender's personal goals in relation to parenting and/or family reunification into broader offender management planning.
- Providing practical support to women to assist them in balancing their correctional obligations with primary carer responsibilities.

Addressing Varied and Complex Needs

Correctional services for women adopt holistic, integrated and flexible responses which take account of individual needs and respond to linkages between substance abuse, trauma and mental health issues when addressing offending behaviour.

♀ *Women offenders are more likely than their male counterparts to have past histories of trauma and victimisation as well as issues with substance abuse and mental illness, with high rates of co-morbidity of these factors. Evidence suggests that these issues are linked to women's offending behaviour and that mental illness, trauma and substance abuse issues, addressed holistically, are an important treatment target for effective rehabilitation.*

In practice this can mean:

- Supporting women to address past trauma and victimisation in a therapeutic environment in order to prepare them for offending behaviour interventions.
- Integrating therapeutic responses with culturally appropriate interventions that give women the opportunity to understand and take responsibility for their offending behaviour.

Providing Respect and Safety

Correctional services for women are delivered in a safe and supportive environment which promotes dignity and trusting relationships to foster improved self esteem and responsibility for making positive life choices.

♀ *Evidence suggests that respect and safety are important factors in improving behavioural outcomes. For women, a strong association between offending behaviour and poor self esteem makes it critical that these factors are addressed alongside conventional correctional interventions. Personal restrictions associated with correctional supervision can contribute to feelings of powerlessness and poor self esteem, and it is therefore important to provide programs and services designed for rehabilitation in an environment which allows women to feel physically and psychologically safe and which fosters mutual respect and positive relationships.*

In practice this can mean:

- Correctional staff acting as positive role models to foster mutual respect in their interactions with women offenders.
- Actively recruiting correctional services staff and practitioners who have experience and life skills that enable them to engage appropriately with women offenders.

Creating Opportunities

Correctional services for women create opportunities where possible to address socioeconomic and other forms of disadvantage by offering meaningful choices and maximising the individual's control over her circumstances and environment.

♀ *Women offenders experience significant socioeconomic disadvantage arising from gender related differences in earnings, employment outcomes and child rearing that are compounded by histories of victimisation and substance abuse. Evidence suggests that providing viable options for improving life skills and opportunities through education and training*

can assist women offenders to better support themselves and their children, while practical and financial assistance can reduce the economic pressures that are linked to women's re-offending⁸.

In practice this can mean:

- Providing a range of educational, training and work options which are of relevance to women's development and go beyond traditional female work opportunities.
- Training correctional staff to identify women's practical needs and providing information to allow them to make gender and culturally appropriate service referrals.

Supporting Continuity

Correctional services for women adopt a consistent and co-ordinated approach to service delivery that utilises inter-agency partnerships and provides opportunity for support that extends beyond the period of correctional supervision.

♀ *Continuity in the provision of programs and services is considered particularly important given the centrality of relationships in women's lives, with evidence suggesting that maintaining linkages with support providers beyond the period of contact with correctional services is an important factor in reducing women's re-offending. This can be achieved through a consistent approach by correctional staff and by utilising partnerships with community based service providers.*

In practice this can mean:

- Providing, as far as possible, a correctional experience for individuals which minimises disruption (e.g. consistency of supervision, accommodation, visits) while providing opportunities for variety.
- Linking women to gender and culturally appropriate community based agencies early in the period of correctional supervision.

8 See, for example Bloom, B, Owen, B, Covington, S (2003) *Gender-Responsive Strategies: Research, Practice, and Guiding Principles for Women Offenders*, Washington, DC: National Institute of Corrections.

Responding to Diversity

Correctional services for women respond appropriately to women's diverse characteristics as part of an inclusive, gender responsive approach that takes account of individual characteristics and circumstances.

♀ *While women share common issues due to their gender, the life experience of women is influenced by other characteristics including culture, ethnicity, age, sexuality and disability. Women who are part of a minority group can be further marginalised by these differences, and it is therefore important to provide culturally appropriate and gender responsive correctional services which recognise the individual circumstances of women.*

In practice this can mean:

- Actively seeking advice and support from relevant community services to better respond to women's language, cultural or other specific needs.
- Providing information and practical assistance to women offenders in a manner which is accessible and appropriate to their needs.

Informed by Best Practice

Correctional services for women are informed by best practice knowledge and research on effective responses for women offenders, and incorporate ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure continuous improvement.

♀ *The recent increase in women's incarceration around the world has prompted an increase in the amount of research being undertaken to understand the profile and specific needs of women offenders. The growing evidence base is informing a gendered analysis of existing approaches and, increasingly, the design of correctional policy and practices to meet the specific needs of women offenders.*

In practice this can mean:

- Using evidence around the distinct risk/needs profile of women offenders to inform assessment and offender management processes.
- Undertake evaluation and use outcomes to identify positive impacts and further opportunities, to direct future organisational investment.

Operational Objectives

The following operational objectives describe the key elements of a correctional system that is responsive to the needs of women offenders. They are intended to inform all aspects of correctional practice by providing a set of pragmatic instructions on the development and delivery of gender-appropriate correctional programs and services, offender management practices, workforce training and development and policy and planning imperatives.

1. Correctional Services for Women:

- a) Are provided by staff with a demonstrated ability to respond to the needs and life circumstances of women offenders, including the ability to be empathic and supportive while maintaining professional boundaries;
- b) Provide opportunities for women to address, in a supportive environment, interrelated issues of mental health, substance abuse, past trauma and victimisation as part of a broader intervention plan;
- c) Provide women with opportunities to improve their life circumstances through the provision of appropriate education, practical advice, assistance and skill development;
- d) Provide vocational education and training pathways that are relevant to women's needs and acknowledge the difficulties associated with gaining employment post release;
- e) Provide the best possible access to the range of services that suit the needs of women, using flexible approaches in consideration of their small numbers within the corrections system;
- f) Are sensitive to women's risk and need profile in relation to accommodation, access to services and the deployment of security measures and the use of force;
- g) Are delivered via a range of interagency partnerships that address women's multiple and diverse needs and provide the option of a continuing relationship beyond their correctional supervision;

- h) Incorporate culturally relevant provision designed to meet the needs of Indigenous women, utilising partnerships with Indigenous communities as appropriate;
- i) Enable access for women with diverse cultural needs by providing appropriate language assistance as well as culturally relevant services, delivered in partnership with community based providers;
- j) Where it is demonstrated as necessary, support additional measures to ensure access for women with a disability;
- k) Have their design and delivery informed by empirical evidence regarding service outcomes; and
- l) Are subject to regular self appraisal to ensure continuous improvement, incorporating, where appropriate, feedback from women receiving services.

2. Programs for Women Prisoners and Offenders:

- a) Target identified barriers to women understanding and addressing their offending behaviour;
- b) Are holistic and integrated: they should be designed and delivered in a way that addresses multiple, diverse needs in a considered manner that may include staged or simultaneous approaches;
- c) Consider needs such as self esteem, victimisation, parental role and significant relationships in establishing an environment in which to address offending behaviour;
- d) Are designed to foster the development of positive, trusting relationships between staff and participants;
- e) Incorporate a focus on individual strengths to improve confidence in the context of a management plan to address offending behaviour;
- f) Support the use of female role models, mentoring and peer support, recognising the opportunities for women to learn from and

support each other in working towards their rehabilitation;

- g) Are designed to reflect and respect the centrality of women's connections with family and significant others and their parenting responsibilities. Where appropriate, they should actively include family and/or support networks in rehabilitation activities;
- h) Link therapeutic interventions with practical assistance and opportunities for skill development;
- i) Are designed to incorporate flexible delivery models, including all-women group settings and individual counselling as appropriate, and provide for the needs of women under both long and short term correctional supervision;
- j) Incorporate tailored offending behaviour modules targeting women assessed as a moderate to high risk of re-offending;
- k) Are delivered in an environment which is safe and supportive, with clear role boundaries and expectations and an appropriate tolerance of setbacks in the context of broader rehabilitation objectives;
- l) Incorporate, where appropriate Indigenous specific programs developed and delivered in partnership with Indigenous communities;
- m) Acknowledge that no two women are alike, and take into account the context of individual women's lives, including issues related to ethnicity, religion, age, physical and mental ability, sexuality and family context; and
- n) Make reasonable adjustments to accommodate women with specific needs, to facilitate equitable participation and outcomes for all women.

3. Offender Management Practices for Women⁹:

- a) Understand offender management principles in the context of women's distinct needs, characteristics, life experiences and family circumstances, to actively engage women offenders in activities to address offending behaviour;
- b) Incorporate assessment tools that have been developed specifically for use with women offenders, which are applied by practitioners with an understanding of the impact of gender differences on assessment;
- c) Incorporate a case management approach that is consistent over time and responds to emerging needs;
- d) Establish a structured regime that acknowledges women's different personal and skill aspirations and supports creative and flexible approaches to learning;
- e) Provide staff with sufficient information and support to accurately identify women's needs and refer them to appropriate resources to address the practical needs of themselves and their families;
- f) Utilise formalised interagency partnerships which allow for co-ordinated case management and facilitate sharing of relevant information;
- g) Provide women with clear, accurate, accessible and timely information in relation to rules, regulations and other relevant correctional processes;
- h) Include a structured and consistent disciplinary system that takes into account women's behaviour, needs and circumstances;
- i) Acknowledge the centrality of children and other personal relationships in women's lives and facilitate the establishment and maintenance of these relationships where appropriate;

- j) Understand that women's offending behaviour often develops through relationships with family members, friends and significant others; and
- k) Actively encourage personal responsibility and self-reliance by maximising women's participation in, and control over, case planning and delivery.

4. Workforce Recruitment, Training and Development:

- a) Actively promotes strong representation of female staff at all levels of correctional services staff and practitioners, while taking into account the importance of positive role models of both genders;
- b) Incorporates strategies to recruit correctional staff with appropriate skills and experience to promote positive interactions with women offenders;
- c) Incorporates training in gender responsive principles as a mandatory pre-service training module for all staff recruited to work in prisons and community corrections settings. Training should include the following key themes:
 - i. the distinct characteristics of women offenders, women's different pathways into the criminal justice system and their responses to correctional interventions;
 - ii. the importance of relationships in women's lives, including partners, friends and mother-child relationships, and issues associated with separation and reunification;
 - iii. the link between women's substance abuse, mental health issues and past victimisation, and opportunities to address offending behaviour in the context of these issues;
 - iv. effective relationship management strategies, including empathetic and supportive communication, ethical behaviour,

9 'Offender Management' refers to Corrections Victoria's integrated approach to assessment, case planning and supervision of offenders in response to their individual needs. The aim of the offender management system is to motivate offenders to engage in and continue with programs and services, identify offenders issues, coordinate and prioritise their access to appropriate programs, services and activities and to promote wellbeing. Refer to the 'Corrections Victoria Policy Context' section of this document for information about Corrections Victoria's Offender Management Framework.

- professional boundaries/limit setting and effective role modelling and mentoring;
- v. inter-cultural awareness and communication, including sensitive management of language and faith based differences in a correctional setting;
 - vi. disability awareness, including strategies to appropriately manage women offenders with a disability; and
 - vii. the purpose and importance of both structured education and training and other types of skill development in reducing women's risk of re-offending.
- d) Includes both long and short term objectives in relation to improving organisational culture and staff knowledge and skills in relation to managing women;
 - e) Uses interagency partnerships as an opportunity for training of staff across a range of disciplines and agencies on issues such as treatment, case management and the criminal justice system;
 - f) Provides support and advice to staff in acknowledgement of the different impact associated with working in a correctional environment where relationships are central.
 - g) Incorporates a mechanism for sharing knowledge about successful strategies for managing women offenders.
- c) Incorporates analysis of relevant evidence about best practice management of women offenders into decision making processes;
 - d) Includes consultation with the women's policy portfolio area and/or operational staff with expertise in delivering services to women to support decision making, with community based expertise drawn on where relevant;
 - e) Reviews and evaluates impacts of initiatives on women prisoners and/or offenders in the context of the Women's Correctional Services Framework principles and objectives;
 - f) Considers implications of relevant anti-discrimination and human rights legislation;
 - g) Uses research and evaluation to identify emerging issues and opportunities, and to inform future investment; and
 - h) Sources best practice examples from both within and external to the organisation to inform approaches to reducing women's re-offending.

5. Correctional Policy and Planning:

- a) Supports a strategic approach which is consistent with the principles and objectives contained in the Women's Correctional Services Framework;
- b) Regularly monitors the distinct profile of women offenders to inform the development of new approaches which impact on this cohort;

PART THREE

Workplan for Priority Projects 2007/08 – 2008/09

The Workplan for Priority Projects describes 30 projects identified as critical to the Women's Correctional Services Framework's aim of improving the gender responsiveness of correctional services, to achieve better outcomes for women prisoners, women supervised by CCS and women supervised by the Home Detention Program.

Building on the aims and objectives of the Victorian government strategy *Better Pathways: An Integrated Response to Women's Offending and Re-offending*, the projects included in the Workplan are each classified under one of the relevant four key themes identified in *Better Pathways*:

- Reducing women's offending¹⁰;
- Reducing women's imprisonment;
- Reducing women's re-offending; and
- Reducing women's victimisation.

A number of the projects included in the Workplan relate directly to deliverables and future directions identified in the *Better Pathways* strategy, where these have a particular focus on improving the gender responsiveness of operational practice in Victoria's correctional system. Projects related to *Better Pathways* initiatives are indicated with the symbol "BP", and include detail around the specific work to be undertaken in support of the initiative.

The description of each project includes a statement of activity, rationale for its inclusion, project outputs and potential outcomes.

¹⁰ The aim of 'reducing offending' highlights the cross-government commitment under *Better Pathways* to address prevention and early intervention in relation to offending behaviour. While outside the scope of the correctional services system, there is an opportunity for Corrections Victoria to contribute to this aim through undertaking research on relevant 'at risk' populations entering the corrections system.

Reducing Women's Offending – projects which aim to reduce the number of women who offend

	ACTIVITY	RATIONALE	OUTPUT/S	OUTCOME/S
1 BP	<p>Ensure research priorities for Corrections Victoria are aligned with the future directions identified in <i>Better Pathways</i> to address gaps in our understanding of women's offending:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the precursors to young and adolescent girls' offending; • Understanding the link between women's victimisation and offending; • Understanding the link between women's problem gambling and offending, particularly in relation Vietnamese women; and • Understanding the impact of women's imprisonment on dependent children. 	<p>Research to inform the development of the Better Pathways strategy has identified a number of key gaps in our understanding of women's offending.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Better Pathways</i> research priorities are undertaken as a priority under Corrections Victoria's Research Agenda. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved understanding of issues impacting on women's offending. • Improved understanding of the impact of women's imprisonment on dependent children.
2 BP	<p>Develop and deliver training for Community Correctional Officers on court advice and assessment reports sensitive to women offenders' needs.</p>	<p>Assessment reports should take into account gender specific factors that impact on a woman's capacity to comply with the conditions of a community correctional order, e.g. pregnancy and primary carer responsibilities, as well as the impact of sentencing on dependent children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training on gender sensitive court advice and assessment reports is developed and rolled out across Community Correctional Services (CCS). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced gender and cultural responsiveness of assessment reports and court advice. • Increased take-up of non-custodial sentencing options for women offenders.

Reducing Women's Imprisonment – projects which aim to reduce the number of women who enter prison custody

	ACTIVITY	RATIONALE	OUTPUT/S	OUTCOME/S
3 BP	<p>Develop skills of existing CCS staff to undertake specialist women offender advisory role in CCS.</p> <p><i>(Refer BP deliverable 7 "Employ specialist women offender advisors in Community Correctional Services")</i></p>	<p>While a gender specific approach to the delivery of community based correctional services is required, the women offender population is small and dispersed, creating a challenge for CCS in developing local expertise in managing this cohort.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training is provided to selected staff within CCS to undertake the role of specialist advisor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in breaches of women offenders supervised on community correctional orders. • Increased judicial confidence in the effectiveness of supervised community-based orders for women offenders. • Increased use of CCS rather than prison as a sentencing option.
4 BP	<p>Develop and deliver training for Community Corrections Officers on the supervision of women offenders.</p>	<p>There is a need to ensure CCS provides a gender specific response to women offenders, as identified in the Correctional Management Standards for CCS (2005).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training on effective supervision of female offender, informed by Women's Correctional Services Framework principles and objectives, is developed and rolled out across CCS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in breaches of supervised community based orders by women offenders. • Increased judicial confidence in the effectiveness of supervised community correctional orders for women offenders. • Increased use of CCS rather than prison as a sentencing option for women offenders.
5 BP	<p>Investigate feasibility of crediting approved program participation towards community work requirements.</p> <p><i>(Refer BP future direction "Recognising program participation as community work hours for offenders on community based orders")</i></p>	<p>The ability of women offenders under the supervision of CCS to participate in programs is affected by competing responsibilities, including community work requirements and child care.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A business case is developed for crediting approved program participation towards community work requirements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A proposal is developed to increase female participation in programs designed to reduce re-offending and/or improve skills and opportunities.

Reducing Women's Re-offending – projects which aim to reduce the number of women who re-offend

	ACTIVITY	RATIONALE	OUTPUT/S	OUTCOME/S
6 BP	<p>Assess the validity of VISAT for women prisoners and offenders under the supervision of CCS and identify changes required for risk assessment process.</p> <p><i>(Refer BP deliverable 10 “Develop and implement a risk assessment tool for women offenders”)</i></p>	<p>Compared with men, women are typically a low-risk and high-need offender group who respond best to integrated responses that address multiple needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An analysis is undertaken of preliminary VISAT data to determine gender-based differences in risk assessment results. • Recommendations for changes to VISAT tool/ procedures are developed in accordance with findings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment tools used by correctional staff accurately determine the risks and need profile of women offenders. • Correctional interventions to women are delivered based on accurate risk/need assessment.
7	<p>Develop and implement a gender specific classification system for the Women's Prisons Region.</p>	<p>Classification systems that fail to take into account the lower security risk posed by women tend to over-classify them. This can have implications for their placement in the prison as well as access to certain programs, such as pre-release programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A classification system and assessment process for women is developed and implemented for the Women's Prisons Region. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of women prisoners in accordance with a classification system which accurately assesses their security risk.
8 BP	<p>An education needs assessment toolkit is developed for prisoners that takes into account gender specific needs in its development and delivery.</p> <p><i>(Refer BP deliverable 20 “Ensure prison based education and training meets the needs of women”)</i></p>	<p>Women prisoners distinct needs, characteristics, life experiences and family circumstances need to be considered in determining their educational needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A gender responsive language, literacy and numeracy assessment tool is developed. • The tool is implemented in the Women's Prisons Region. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved education assessment processes to identify women's language, literacy and numeracy needs.

Reducing Women's Re-offending – projects which aim to reduce the number of women who re-offend

	ACTIVITY	RATIONALE	OUTPUT/S	OUTCOME/S
9 BP	<p>Deliverables under the framework for education and training in Victorian prisons are responsive to the distinct profile of women prisoners.</p> <p><i>(Refer BP deliverable 20 "Ensure prison based education and training meets the needs of women")</i></p>	<p>Women's educational objectives may not always be specifically related to gaining employment, and may also include personal development and improving life skills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender responsive deliverables are developed for inclusion in the Framework for education and training in Victorian prisons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved education and skill development for women prisoners which takes account the diversity of needs, experiences and life paths of women prisoners.
10 BP	<p>Establish a women's health and wellbeing clinic at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre.</p> <p><i>(Refer BP deliverable 12 "Ensure prisoner health care is responsive to the needs of women")</i></p>	<p>Women prisoners have significant health needs and are more likely to access health services while in prison. There is an opportunity to provide a preventative focus in health services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A service model for a health and wellbeing clinic is developed. • The new service model is delivered at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved assessment and treatment of women's overall health and wellbeing in prison. • Education of women prisoners about preventative health strategies to improve their overall health and wellbeing. • Improved health outcomes for women prisoners.
11	<p>Develop a precinct at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre incorporating appropriate accommodation for Mothers and Children Program participants.</p> <p><i>(Refer BP future direction "Strengthening support for women prisoners with children residing in custody")</i></p>	<p>The Mothers and Children Program operates in acknowledgement of the importance of maintaining the bond between mother and child for both the child's development and the rehabilitative prospects of the mother. There is currently no dedicated accommodation for Program participants at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A dedicated precinct is established at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre to accommodate Mothers and Children participants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved safety and wellbeing of children residing with their mothers in prison. • Improved program and service provision leading to improved outcomes for mothers and children.

Reducing Women's Re-offending – projects which aim to reduce the number of women who re-offend

	ACTIVITY	RATIONALE	OUTPUT/S	OUTCOME/S
12	Review and redevelop correctional standards for managing women prisoners.	The Women's Prisons Region incorporates a distinct prisoner profile and operational environment which requires gender appropriate standards to guide procedures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate correctional management standards are developed for the Women's Prisons Region. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced gender responsivity in the management of women prisoners.
13	Review and redevelop correctional standards for women undertaking Community Correctional Services orders.	Women offenders in the community share a range of complex needs which differ from those of their male counterparts and impact on the way they respond to correctional supervision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correctional Management Standards for CCS are reviewed and amended in line with the Women's Correctional Services Framework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced gender responsivity in the management of women under CCS supervision.
14	Develop a gender responsive violent offending behaviour program for women offenders.	Women who use violence often do so in different ways and for different reasons to men, and interventions therefore need to understand women's violence within a gender specific context.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A violence program is developed which meets the gender specific needs of females convicted of a violent offence. • A gender specific violence program is delivered to violent female offenders with a moderate to high risk of re-offending. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved response to the criminogenic needs of women with a violent offending profile, leading to a reduced risk of re-offending.
15	Investigate the development of a holistic model of intervention for women and offenders that addresses both criminogenic and other needs.	Evidence suggests that women respond best to holistic correctional interventions that address offending behaviour in the context of interrelated issues such as drug abuse, mental illness, past victimisation and self esteem.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specifications are developed for a holistic model of intervention for women offenders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved organisational knowledge of models of intervention that address the multiple and complex needs associated with women's offending.

Reducing Women's Re-offending – projects which aim to reduce the number of women who re-offend

	ACTIVITY	RATIONALE	OUTPUT/S	OUTCOME/S
16	Design and deliver training on working with women prisoners to all new prison recruits, including more detailed modules for staff working in the Women's Prisons Region.	Compared with men, women respond differently to correctional interventions, and it is critical that staff in women's prisons understand and manage these differences appropriately.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A training module on working with women prisoners, informed by Women's Correctional Services Framework principles and objectives, is developed and rolled out for delivery to new recruits working in prisons. • A more detailed training module is developed and rolled out to staff working in the Women's Prisons Region. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved staff understanding and management of women prisoners' specific needs.
17	Develop specific security review modules for use by the Security & Emergency Services Group (SESG) for the Women's Prisons Region.	As a result of women's distinct risk/need profile, the operational environment of women's prisons differs substantially from that of men's prisons.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SESG Security Review modules are redeveloped for use in the Women's Prisons Region. • Revised SESG Security Review modules are rolled out in the Women's Prisons Region. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security reviews undertaken in the Women's Prisons Region take into account the differences associated with a women's prison environment, while retaining independence and integrity of the process.
18	Review eligibility criteria for women prisoners for Rehabilitation and Transition Permits.	Compared with men, women prisoners are less likely to attempt to escape from custody. Further, women serve shorter prison sentences and are therefore less likely to have access to leave permits under current eligibility criteria.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of women's access to Rehabilitation and Transition Permits is undertaken. • Eligibility criteria for women in relation to the Rehabilitation and Transition Permit Program is reviewed and amended as appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased participation by women prisoners in leave programs designed to assist family re-unification and integration into the community post release.

Reducing Women's Re-offending – projects which aim to reduce the number of women who re-offend

	ACTIVITY	RATIONALE	OUTPUT/S	OUTCOME/S
19	Establish new disciplinary procedures for the Women's Prisons Region.	Women prisoners are overrepresented as participants in disciplinary hearings. Given women's different behaviour while in custody, and the limited opportunities for progression available in the Women's Prisons Region, there is a need to review existing disciplinary procedures for women.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A system of rewards and sanctions is developed for the Women's Prisons Region. • Procedures are established to increase staff uptake of non-formal disciplinary resolution processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in the number of disciplinary hearings in the Women's Prisons Region.
20	Devise a new structured prisoner regime for the Women's Prisons Region.	Traditional prison-based industry and vocational training opportunities have been developed to meet the needs of male prisoners, and are therefore less relevant to the needs and interests of women prisoners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Findings from the review of prison industries are analysed with respect to the needs of women prisoners • A model for a new structured prisoner regime is developed for implementation in the Women's Prisons Region. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A holistic and flexible approach to the learning, work and recreation needs of women prisoners.
21	Review prisoner communication procedures to ensure relevance to current and emerging communication technology.	Restrictions on contacting mobile phones and utilising other emerging technology is making it increasingly difficult for women prisoners to keep in contact with family, in particular children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication procedures are reviewed and revised as appropriate in line with new and emerging technology. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved communication options for women prisoners wishing to keep in contact with family.

Reducing Women's Victimization – projects which aim to reduce the level of women's victimisation

	ACTIVITY	RATIONALE	OUTPUT/S	OUTCOME/S
22	Corrections Inspectorate actively recruits prison visitors from a range of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.	The profile of women prisoners is becoming increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse, and it is important to ensure the needs of these groups are identified.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals from a range of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are recruited as Prison Visitors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved understanding of the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse women in prison.
23 BP	Gender sensitive strip searching procedures are implemented and actively monitored to ensure they are sensitive to women's needs. <i>(Refer BP deliverable 26 "Establish procedures for conducting personal searches across the women's prisons system that are sensitive to women's needs")</i>	Gender specific strip searching procedures are necessary in acknowledgement of the significant number of women prisoners have experienced physical and sexual abuse in their lives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender sensitive strip searching procedures piloted in the Women's Prisons Region are formally implemented. Specific strip searching procedures in the Women's Prisons Region are actively monitored to ensure they remain sensitive to the needs of women prisoners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in the number of strip searches undertaken. Reduction in potential for women to feel victimised through gender sensitive strip searching procedures.
24	Actions delivered under the Corrections Victoria Disability Framework meet the gender specific needs of women offenders with a disability.	Corrections Victoria Disability Framework needs to have a gendered focus to ensure it responds effectively the distinct needs of women offenders with a disability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outputs relevant to women offenders under the Corrections Victoria Disability Framework are developed with consideration of the gender specific needs of women with a disability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved responsiveness of Corrections Victoria and its programs and services for women with a disability.
25	A profile of the spoken and preferred languages of offenders from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds is developed, which includes consideration of gender.	There is currently limited information available in relation to the language needs of CALD prisoners and offenders, which has implications for our understanding of program and service needs for women in this cohort.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A profile of the preferred and spoken languages of CALD women in prison and under the supervision of CCS is developed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved understanding of the language needs and accessibility of mainstream programs to CALD women in prison and under the supervision of CCS.

Reducing Women's Victimization – projects which aim to reduce the level of women's victimisation

	ACTIVITY	RATIONALE	OUTPUT/S	OUTCOME/S
26	Corrections Victoria's Koori Action Plan takes into account the specific needs of Indigenous women offenders.	Corrections Victoria's Koori Action Plan needs to have a gendered approach to ensure it responds effectively to the distinct needs of Indigenous women offenders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions delivered under the Corrections Victoria Koori Action Plan are responsive to the needs of Indigenous women offenders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved responsiveness to the needs of Indigenous women offenders. • Compliance with principles and objectives of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement 2.
27	The policies, programs, practices and infrastructure of the Women's Prisons Region are reviewed with respect to compliance with anti-discrimination and human rights legislation.	An audit of the Women's Prisons Region with respect to anti-discrimination and human rights legislation has been recommended by the Equal Opportunity Commission Victoria. Further, Corrections Victoria is obliged to ensure its legislation, policies and procedures are compliant with the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities (2006).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An audit of the Women's Prisons Region policies, programs, practices and infrastructure is undertaken with respect to human rights and anti-discrimination legislation. • A review of all Corrections Victoria legislation, regulation, policy and procedure is undertaken to ensure compliance with the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced accountability of the women's prisons with respect to anti-discrimination and human rights considerations.
28	Establish separate use of force policy and procedures for the Women's Prisons Region.	Women's lower security risk should be considered in determining an appropriate risk management approach to the use of force. Further, the needs of pregnant women and children residing in custody are critical in developing such procedures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A separate use of force policy is developed for the Women's Prisons Region. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Options for the use of force reflect the different risk profile and operational environment in women's prisons.

Reducing Women's Victimization – projects which aim to reduce the level of women's victimisation

	ACTIVITY	RATIONALE	OUTPUT/S	OUTCOME/S
29	Conduct research into the feasibility of implementing alternative procedures to urinalysis for drug testing purposes.	Urinalysis can be an intrusive method of testing for drug use, particularly in acknowledgement of the significant number of women prisoners who have experienced physical and sexual abuse in their lives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research is undertaken into the current validity of saliva testing and other technology as an alternative to urinalysis. • Recommendations are developed in relation to the feasibility of introducing saliva testing or other technology as an alternative for urinalysis testing of offenders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A proposal is developed to reduce women's potential victimisation through less intrusive drug testing procedures.
30 BP	Conduct research to identify the proportion of those received into custody who are mothers and/or primary carers of dependent age children. <i>(Refer BP deliverable 28 "Developing a model of support for the children of women in prison custody")</i>	Data in relation to prisoners' parental/primary carer status is not routinely collected by Corrections Victoria. This information could assist planning for the delivery of correctional services that better meet the needs of women prisoners and their children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A pilot project is undertaken to collect information about parental/primary carer status of women entering prison. • Integration of primary carer information into existing prisoner database is investigated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness and incorporation of women prisoners' family circumstances in the delivery of correctional services.

Attachment 1: Summary of 28 *Better Pathways* strategy deliverables and nine future directions¹¹

Reducing women's offending	
<i>Future directions</i>	
Understanding the precursors to young and adolescent girls' offending	
Understanding the link between women's victimisation and offending	
Understanding the link between women's problem gambling and offending	
Understanding the impact of women's imprisonment on dependent children	
Reducing women's imprisonment	
<i>Strategy deliverables</i>	
1	Establish dedicated transitional housing for female CREDIT/Bail Support Program clients
2	Establish dedicated supported transitional housing for Indigenous women on bail
3	Work with the judiciary to provide information to judges and magistrates on the effectiveness of sentencing orders for women offenders
4	Share research on women offenders with defence lawyers
5	Develop and deliver training for Community Corrections Officers on court advice and assessment reports sensitive to women offenders needs
6	Provide practical support to women offenders on supervised community-based orders
7	Employ specialist women offender advisors in Community Correctional Services
8	Develop and deliver training for Community Corrections Officers on the supervision of women offenders
<i>Future directions</i>	
Recognising program participation as community work hours for offenders on community based orders	
Reducing women's re-offending	
<i>Strategy deliverables</i>	
9	Develop a women's correctional services framework
10	Develop and implement a risk assessment tool for women offenders
11	Deploy a full-time Vietnamese liaison officer for the women's prison system
12	Ensure prisoner health care is responsive to the needs of women

¹¹ Strategy deliverables are to be delivered by 30 June 2009, with future directions for action over the medium to longer term.

Reducing women's re-offending	
<i>Strategy deliverables</i>	
13	Expand the Aboriginal Women's Mentoring Program
14	Establish a new flexible intensive support unit at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre
15	Expand and upgrade the medical centre at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre
16	Create new programs space at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre
17	Expand and upgrade the visits centre at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre
18	Expand and upgrade the education facilities at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre
19	Expand and upgrade the prison industries facilities at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre
20	Ensure prison-based education and training meets the needs of women
21	Provide employment and training opportunities to women offenders and women exiting prison
22	Increase the number of suitable worksites and work options for women offenders undertaking unpaid community work
23	Assist women prisoners to minimise utility related debt
24	Extend post-release support for women exiting prison
25	Improve access to women's health services for women exiting prison
<i>Future directions</i>	
Addressing the needs of Vietnamese women prisoners	
Strengthening support for women prisoners with children residing in custody	
Reducing women's victimisation	
<i>Strategy deliverables</i>	
26	Establish procedures for conducting personal searches across the women's prison system that are sensitive to women's needs
27	Provide sexual assault counselling, advocacy and support services to women prisoners
28	Develop a model of support for the children of women in custody
<i>Future directions</i>	
Enhancing women's access to legal information and advice	
Enhancing women's access to victim support services	

Further information

How can I find out more about the Better Pathways in Practice: The Women's Correctional Services Framework?

Further information about the *Better Pathways in Practice: The Women's Correctional Services Framework* may be obtained by emailing a request to Corrections Victoria: corrections@justice.vic.gov.au

Additional copies of this document may be downloaded from the Department of Justice website: www.justice.vic.gov.au

Further information
corrections@justice.vic.gov.au
www.justice.vic.gov.au

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