

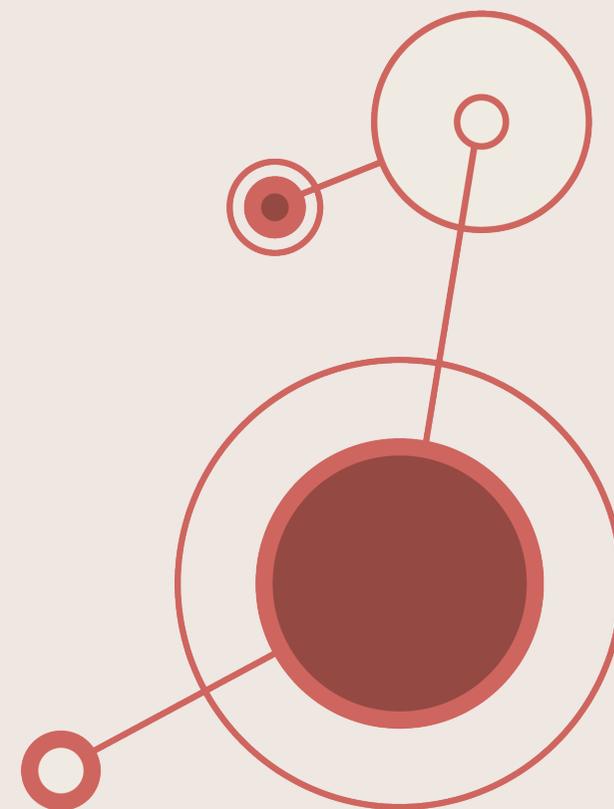
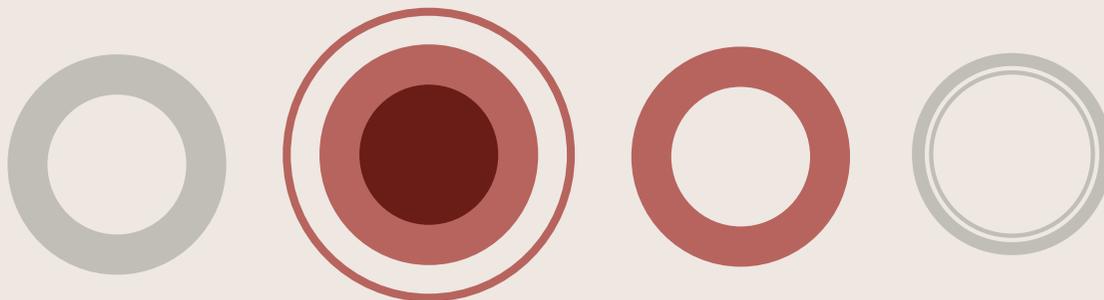
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Women in Prison. It's Complicated: *South Australia's Experience*



Government of South Australia
Department for Correctional Services





About me and work

- From victims of crime to Correctional Services

What I do in DCS

- One of 5 Executives who manage:
 - 9 prisons
 - 16 Community Correctional Centres
 - About 3000 prisoners (200 women)
 - 7000 offenders
 - 1900 staff

This presentation will cover:

- Who are women offenders?
- Differences between female and male offenders.
- What is SA doing and how are we going?
- What can community members and organisations do that assists?

What's different about women offenders?

- Greater number have trauma histories
- The nature of the trauma is cumulative
- This huge trauma burden expresses itself in high rates of mental illness, behavioral problems and substance misuse
- Substance misuse is mainly for masking pain rather than pleasure

What's different about women offenders?

- Fewer women have criminal histories as adolescents
- Acquisitive crime (theft, fraud etc.) is most common
- Far less violence-related
- Social alienation, anti-social partners and peers are common
- Have poorer education, training and work histories, and greater socioeconomic disadvantage
- Women are more likely to have dependent children

Aboriginal Women



- Over represented in the criminal justice system (racial discrimination, colonisation and breakdown of cultural practices)
- More likely to:
 - enter the criminal justice system as juveniles
 - spend longer on remand
 - get convicted for serious crimes.
 - have committed crime while using alcohol or drugs.
- Aboriginal women have higher rates of
 - victimisation (child abuse, domestic/family violence)
 - PTSD related to factors such as colonisation, early trauma and death rate in the Aboriginal community.
- Have specific needs especially in relation to cultural and family connection

In Summary Women Offenders

- High rates of sexual victimisation, domestic/family violence and trauma
- High rates of mental illness, behavioural disorders and drug addiction
- Offending often occurs in association with intimate relationships - family, friends and significant others.
- High rates of Offences Against Justice Procedures, with drug use breaches common
- High levels of mistrust
- Low levels of hope and sense of agency
- And all of this is amplified in the lives of Aboriginal women

Women cycle in and out of prison



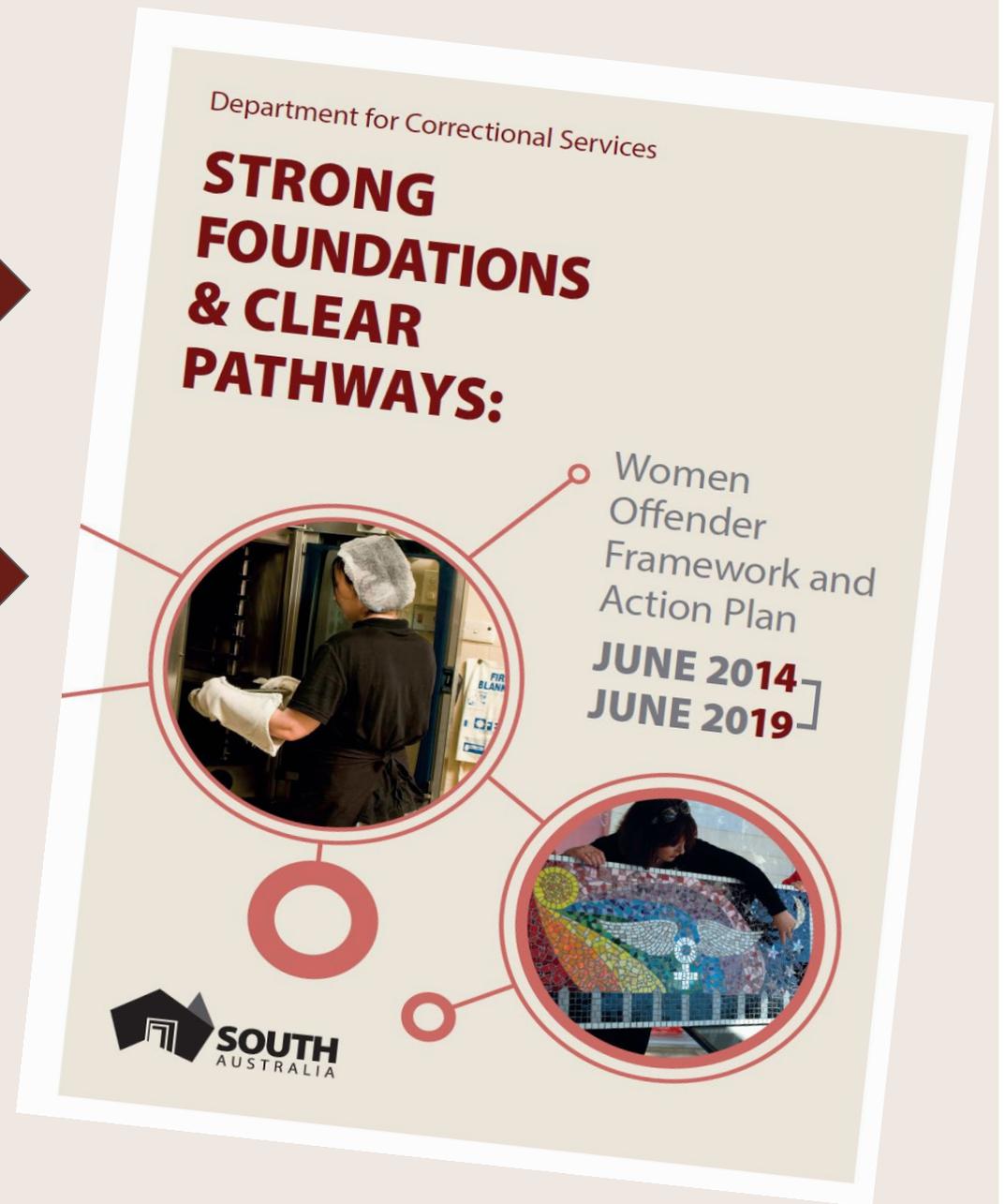
- High proportion of women released after serving relatively short period:
 - 22% released within 30 days
 - 48% released between 3-6 months
- Only 6% of women in prison serve sentences of 5 years or more
- Pathway out of offending: crimes are less serious and less frequent

Current directions:

Provides a brief overview of what informed development and briefly overviews the major elements of the initiative. →

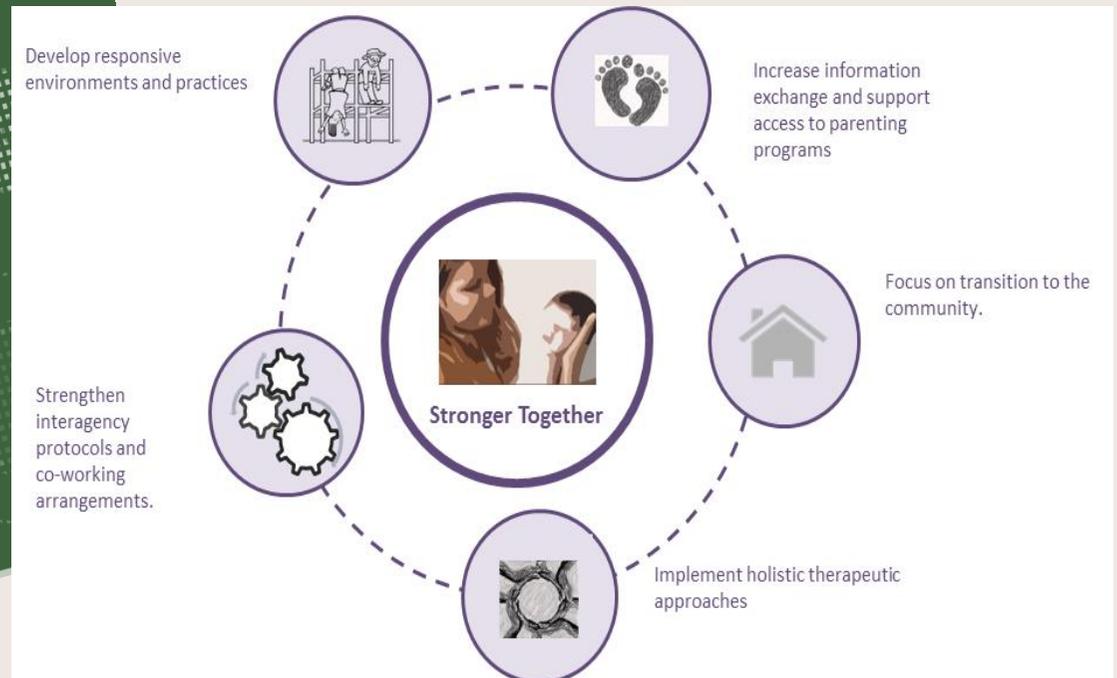
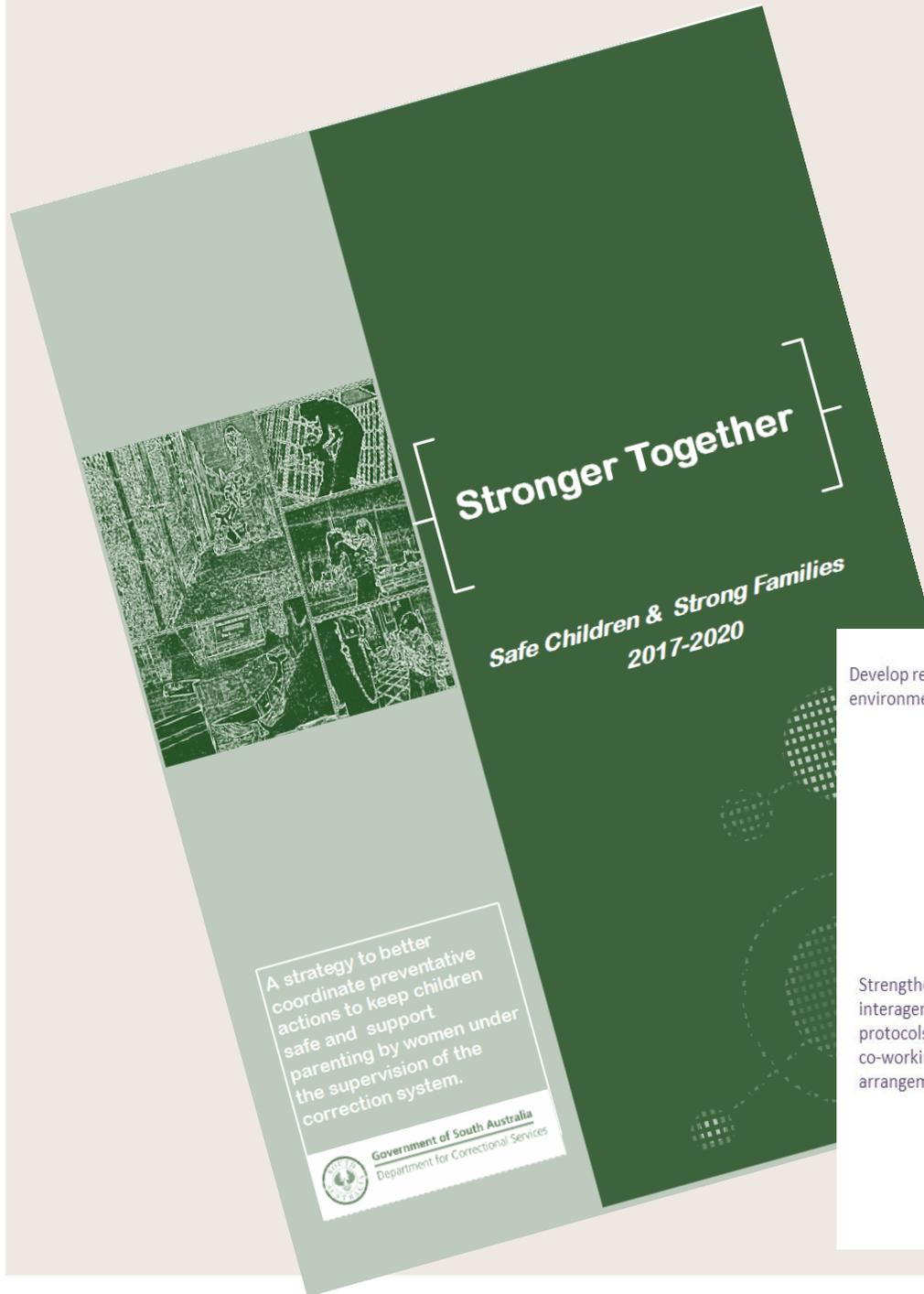
Addresses the two components of the initiative: →

- Women Offender Framework – policy direction
- Action Plan – DCS priorities, initiatives 3 aims, 5 objectives and 22 associated strategies



Most recent initiative:

Women and Children



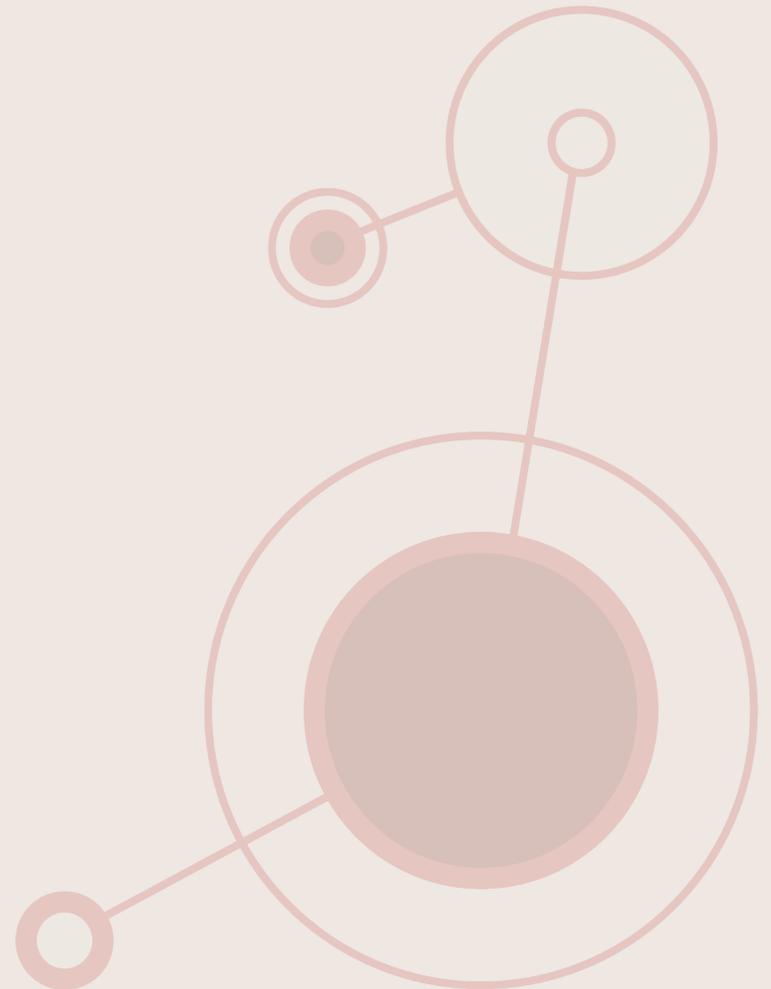
What is Rehabilitation?



- Reducing Recidivism: *Stop Offenders from doing the same thing again*
- Creating a new identity
- Change unhelpful patterns of thinking
- Change anti-social attitudes
- Teach new skills
- Establish pro-social supports

How Do We Rehabilitate?

- Assessment
- Education and Vocational Training
- Case management
- Structured day



How Do We Rehabilitate?

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- Criminogenic and Support Programs
- Progression through prison system and incentivised regimes
- Home Detention
- Supervised Parole

How Do We Rehabilitate?



- Trauma informed approaches to custody – *'Every Contact Matters'*
- The development of women specific programs and community support
- Consideration of the need of women as mothers
- The introduction of gendered custodial practices:
 - X-ray machines
 - Visits and children
 - Lockdown times

It's Complicated



- Women offenders tend to be high need and low risk
- Pathways out of offending are not off and on
- Women have less power than men in the wider community
- Trauma histories and prison environments

It's Complicated



- Dichotomies are not helpful:
 - victims and perpetrators
 - success and failure
- Low risk women will do well anyway. Target resources at moderate and high risk women.
- Gendered approaches are needed to policing, remand and sentencing.
- Children of offenders are 9 times more likely to offend

U-turn Construction Project

Sarah Paddick, Architect

MOSSOP Constructions

TAFE SA

Department for Correctional Services



Government of South Australia

Department for Correctional Services



What else is SA doing?



- Alternatives to Custody Program:
 - Work Ready, Release Ready Program
 - HISP for women
 - Women only reporting centres
- Women's Safety SA partnership
- Custodial training for working with women
- A focus on gender in our whole organisation:
 - 3 of 6 Executives are women
 - 5 of 9 GMs are women

ABS Data for Corrective Services Australia: January-March 2019

- **Prisoner numbers**  in all states and territories **except SA** and the ACT.
(SA has gone from fourth to fifth highest for incarceration rates)
- **Female prisoner numbers**  2.8% across Australia.
But numbers  in ACT (-13.6%), **SA (-7.7%)** and NT (-0.9%).
- Imprisonment rate  very slightly in SA for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Females
(The SA rate is equal fourth highest in Australia)

What does this mean for KWOOOP?



- Research shows:
 - women in custody can develop into more competent, confident and non-offending members of the community
 - ‘memorable messages’ can change women’s lives and future life courses
- Know that levels of mistrust are high and relationship building takes time and is critical. Long term involvement is important

What does this mean for KWOOOP?



- Focus on learning and progress even if women return to prison or former lifestyle
- Work with the more complex women because women who are low risk of reoffending will do well regardless
- Gendered approaches within the whole criminal justice systems is critical for better outcomes for women and their children

Quote



“Prisons should be reserved for people who scare us, not those who anger us.”

“...prisons should be converted from unremittingly punitive institutions to centres of rehabilitation.”

Mirko Bagaric, Director Evidence-based Sentencing and Criminal Justice Project, Swinburne University