

# Research Brief

## How does the role of custodial staff influence their perceptions of offender rehabilitation and responses to Five Minute Interventions (FMI) training?

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**AIM** To explore how frontline custodial staff across varying roles, including custodial officers, offender services and programs (OSP) staff, and Corrective Services Industries (CSI) overseers, differ in their attitudes towards and perceived abilities for supporting offender rehabilitation. We also examined whether staff groups showed different patterns of change in response to FMI training, which aims to promote a rehabilitative prison culture and develop related skills among all custodial staff.

### **FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

Staff completed surveys before ( $n = 1219$ ) and six weeks after ( $n = 372$ ) FMI training. Prior to training, OSP staff tended to have higher scores on rehabilitation factors, including their attitudes towards prisoners and motivation and ability to support offenders' rehabilitation, than other staff groups. These staff also had the most favourable ratings of perceived job demands, job satisfaction and job stress among the staff groups, on average. In turn, CSI overseers tended to have similar or slightly more favourable ratings on these measures compared to custodial officers.

Custodial officers tended to have moderate associations between rehabilitation factors and their perceptions of job satisfaction and stress. CSI overseers showed similar correlations, albeit with smaller effect sizes. OSP staff showed minimal associations between rehabilitation factors and their experiences of their job, which may be a function of consistently strong rehabilitative orientations and skills among this group.

After FMI training, custodial officers showed significant increases in attitudes towards prisoners, and perceived motivation and ability to help offenders rehabilitate. CSI overseers also reported significant increases in rehabilitative attitudes and perceived ability; mixed-model analyses indicated that overseers showed a magnitude of change in perceived ability after training that was larger than other staff groups. OSP staff did not exhibit significant change on any survey measures after FMI training.

We concluded that while there are benefits in including all custodial staff in FMI training, they have different orientations towards rehabilitation at baseline that may be supported by tailored training or other initiatives to promote a rehabilitative prison environment. Improving attitudes towards prisoners and motivation for rehabilitation may act as important preconditions for development of actionable rehabilitative skills. Associations between these factors and how many custodial staff experience their jobs could have positive implications for the benefits of FMI and related initiatives for staff wellbeing and satisfaction, as well as offender rehabilitation.

## INTRODUCTION

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Historically, efforts to rehabilitate people in prison have been viewed as the province of specialist staff, who deliver structured programs and services to address dynamic risk factors for reoffending (e.g., Bonta & Andrews, 2016). While such initiatives can be effective in reducing reoffending, they typically make up only a small component of inmates' time in prison. They are also contextualised by a broad range of other interactions and influences within the prison environment.

There is increasing recognition that all custodial staff have the potential to contribute (both positively and negatively) to correctional agencies' rehabilitative goals (e.g., Mann et al., 2018; Ricciardelli & Perry, 2016). This may involve both direct effects where custodial staff act as agents of change with inmates, as well as indirect effects where staff adopt a prison culture that enables and promotes rehabilitation. Relationships between inmates and staff have been identified as a critical factor in prison climate (Liebling et al., 2011; Tonkin, 2016), which in turn has been associated with inmates' motivation for change, engagement in interventions and reoffending outcomes (e.g., Auty & Liebling, 2020; Day et al., 2011; Stasch et al., 2018).

As part of initiatives to reduce reoffending among people in prison, Corrective Services NSW is implementing Five Minute Intervention (FMI) training for all staff at correctional centres across the state. Originally developed in the United Kingdom, FMI aims to promote a rehabilitative environment by providing all custodial staff with tools to turn everyday dealings with inmates into meaningful interactions that provide hope and motivate change (Tate et al., 2017). FMI encourages staff to address inmates' thinking and behaviours that may be related to their risk of reoffending, through skills such as building trust, confidence and rapport; giving hope; Socratic questioning; active listening; and positive reinforcement (Mann et al., 2018). In this regard, FMI is not a discrete intervention, but rather is a relational approach that is intended to be applied by staff in all their interactions with inmates (Vickers-Pinchbeck, 2019).

FMI training is delivered to Corrective Services NSW custodial staff who have a range of roles within the prison environment, including custodial officers as well as staff who deliver behaviour change programs and services, education and vocational staff, administration officers and senior management. This is partly intended to promote a shared sense of culture and identification among colleagues across the differing roles. While there are identified benefits to bringing together custodial staff across the various roles, it is likely that they will have differing attitudes, skillsets, and contexts of interaction with inmates that may influence how they respond to FMI and their training needs through such initiatives. For example, the UK literature on FMI primarily targets 'prison officers' (e.g., Kenny & Webster, 2015; Tate et al., 2018; Vickers-Pinchbeck, 2019) and turning their everyday conversations with inmates into rehabilitative opportunities, extending these principles from therapeutic contexts alone. There is an implication that programs staff who routinely deliver behaviour change interventions to inmates are likely to already have relatively advanced skills in many of the areas addressed by FMI, as well as an established rehabilitative orientation by virtue of their substantive role.

One identified staff group who may have unique demands for FMI-related skills and training is Corrective Services Industries (CSI) overseers. Overseers are responsible for supervising inmates who are engaged in employment, as well as providing training in vocational skills. This often involves regular interactions with the same inmates for extended periods across multiple days per week. In this regard the relationship between overseers and inmates is often one of capacity building and mentorship, and there is potential for substantial development of prosocial skills, attitudes and relationships. At the same time, overseers'

primary skillset is in vocational fields and they typically have little formal exposure to rehabilitative interventions or models. In recognition of this, Corrective Services NSW has developed a schedule of training that is designed to follow and complement FMI for CSI overseers, named Words @ Work. This initiative provides additional training to elaborate on FMI skills and apply them to situations and interactions that are specific to overseers, as well as giving information about rehabilitative language and concepts applied in Corrective Services NSW behaviour change programs.

To date, Corrections Research Evaluation and Statistics (CRES) has completed one evaluation of FMI as implemented by Corrective Services NSW. We (Barkworth et al., 2021) surveyed custodial staff from 13 correctional centres before they attended FMI training, and again six weeks after completing training. As a source of comparison, we also conducted surveys over a similar timeframe with staff from five centres who did not receive FMI training. Results indicated that custodial staff reported significant increases in their attitudes towards prisoners, as well as their perceived motivation and ability to support offenders' rehabilitation, after FMI training. Increases in ability to support rehabilitation were also significantly different from non-FMI related variation in scores observed among staff at comparison sites. Additional analyses showed that this pattern of results was replicated for custodial officers specifically, who comprised the large majority of the sample.

## AIMS

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The aim of this study is to explore how frontline custodial staff differ in aspects of their rehabilitative orientations and perceptions that pertain to FMI and promotion of a rehabilitative prison culture more broadly. This study also aimed to examine whether staff across varying roles differed in their responses to FMI training in relation to these factors.

To achieve this, we applied survey data that had been collected from custodial staff before and six weeks after FMI training as part of a previous CRES evaluation (Barkworth et al., 2021). Additional administrative data were used to classify staff into one of three identified frontline staff groups, being custodial officers, offender services and programs (OSP) staff, and CSI overseers. Measures of interest from the survey included factors that may be considered direct targets of FMI, including attitudes towards prisoners, as well as staff perceived ability and motivation to help offenders rehabilitate. We also considered staff perceptions of job stressors and satisfaction, which have previously been associated with rehabilitative orientation (e.g., Dowden & Tellier, 2004; Farkas, 1999; Misis et al., 2013) and may provide additional insights into potential contextual influences on how staff respond to training or implement relevant skills.

It is intended that this study will help to inform strategies for tailoring FMI training and related initiatives, such as Words @ Work, to the specific orientations and responses of different staff groups.

## METHODS

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The sample for this study was derived from custodial staff who attended FMI training as part of its initial phases of implementation across 13 correctional centres throughout 2020. A total of 1360 staff completed valid surveys, and gave consent for use of their responses for evaluation purposes, at the commencement of their training (pre-training surveys).

For the purposes of this study, we included staff who could be classified into one of three operational roles that involve relatively clearly defined, routine frontline activities with inmates. Details about these

staff groups are given in Table 1. This resulted in an applicable sample of 1219 staff who completed pre-training surveys. Of those staff, a total of 372 also completed post-training surveys 6 weeks after FMI training.

**Table 1.** Descriptions and sample sizes of included custodial staff groups

Designation	Position description	<i>n</i> (pre-training)	<i>n</i> (post-training)
Custodial officers	(Senior) Correctional officer	864	243
	Casual correctional officer		
	SAS		
OSP staff	Manager security	183	83
	(Senior) SAPO		
	MOSP		
	Psychologist		
	Case management officer		
CSI overseers	AOD worker	172	46
	(Senior) Overseer		
	Industries officer		
	Education officer		
	Manager industries		

A detailed description of the survey methods is given in Barkworth et al. (2021). In brief, staff were asked to complete pre-training surveys by FMI trainers at the beginning of their first training session, using pen and paper methods. Those who consented to be involved in the evaluation were asked to give their email address. These staff were then emailed a second survey six weeks after training, which was administered using the online survey platform Alchemer. Self-report measures administered in the survey included:

- Attitudes towards prisoners

*The Attitudes towards Prisoners (ATP) scale (Melvin et al., 1985) was designed to measure an individual's attitudes about prisoners in general, with a focus on whether prisoners are viewed as essentially normal people who are capable of rehabilitative change. We assessed staff attitudes using an adapted 11-item version of the ATP (see Barkworth et al., 2021; Kjelsberg et al., 2007).*
- Motivation and ability to support offenders' rehabilitation

*CRES developed a set of 11 items for the purposes of evaluating FMI, which examined staff motivation (e.g. 'I am motivated to help offenders change their criminal thinking or attitudes') and ability (e.g. 'I have the skills I need to help offenders achieve positive and prosocial goals') to help offenders rehabilitate. Validation testing showed that the items load onto 2 factors measuring motivation (7 items) and ability (4 items) to support offenders' rehabilitation (Barkworth et al., 2021).*
- Job demands

*Perceived job demands among custodial staff were assessed using the Correctional Officer Job Demands scale (COJD: Brough & Williams, 2007). This measure assesses the amount of stress staff associate with demands in two broad areas: organisational job demands (e.g. 'understaffing and resource inadequacy'; 6 items) and operational job demands (e.g. 'possibility of violence from offenders'; 4 items).*

- Job stress *Job stress was measured using a 6-item scale developed by Cullen et al. (1985) in their work with custodial staff, which assesses psychological and bodily symptoms of general stress at work.*
- Job satisfaction *We used the short-form version of a scale developed by Warr et al. (1979) to assess job satisfaction. This 9-item scale measures how satisfied staff are with various identified aspects of their job (e.g. 'your physical work conditions').*

Analyses of how staff groups differed at baseline on rehabilitation factors, and how these factors were associated with their overall experiences of their job, were done with all selected staff who had completed surveys prior to FMI training. Comparisons of pre-training scores were made using a series of between-subjects ANOVAs and post-hoc pairwise contrasts between the staff groups. Associations between rehabilitation factors and ratings of job demands, stress and satisfaction were explored using a series of bivariate correlations which were repeated for each of the staff groups.

Analyses of how staff responded to FMI training were made by examining differences in pre-training and post-training survey scores, for those staff who had completed both administrations of the survey. Analyses of the magnitude of change for each staff group included paired sample t-tests, as well as calculations of Cohen's *d* that were adjusted for correlations between repeated measures (Morris & DeShon, 2002)<sup>1</sup>. Comparisons of change between the different staff groups were conducted using mixed methods ANOVAs.

To account for the large sample and number of comparisons, we adopted a conservative alpha value of  $p < .01$  to interpret significant results.

## FINDINGS

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### How do staff groups differ in their perceptions of rehabilitation and job experiences at baseline?

Table 2 gives descriptive statistics for each of the pre-training survey measures completed by custodial officers, OSP staff, and CSI overseers. A consistent pattern emerged whereby OSP staff tended to give the highest ratings of their attitudes towards inmates, as well as their motivation and ability to help offenders' rehabilitation, compared to staff in other groups. In turn, CSI overseers tended to report slightly higher ratings on these measures compared to custodial officers, on average.

Similar patterns were also observed for staff experiences of their jobs. Relative to other staff groups, OSP staff gave the most favourable ratings of their operational and organisational job demands, job stress and job satisfaction on average. CSI overseers also tended to give more positive ratings on these measures compared to custodial officers. One exception is that CSI overseers reported the highest levels of job stress at baseline on average.

A series of one-way ANOVA analyses indicated that there were significant differences in pre-training scores across the staff groups on all survey measures (all  $F_s > 5.00$ ; all  $p_s < .01$ ). Follow-up pairwise comparisons indicated that OSP staff returned significantly more positive scores than both CSI overseers

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<sup>1</sup> As a guide to interpretation, Cohen (1988) reported that the values for *d* corresponding to small, medium and large effect sizes are .2, .5 and .8 respectively.

and custodial officers on all measures with the exception of job stress, where their average scores did not significantly differ from overseers ( $p = .02$ ) or custodial officers ( $p = .82$ ; all other  $ps < .0005$ ).

CSI overseers showed a less pronounced pattern of differences in pre-training scores compared to custodial officers. Pairwise contrasts showed that their perceived ability to help offenders rehabilitate was not significantly different than custodial officers, on average ( $p = .85$ ). The two staff groups also showed non-significant differences in their baseline ratings of job satisfaction ( $p = .10$ ), job stress ( $p = .01$ ), and both organisational ( $p = .92$ ) and operational ( $p = .05$ ) job demands. However, CSI overseers tended to give significantly higher ratings of their attitudes towards prisoners ( $p < .0005$ ) and their perceived motivation to help offenders rehabilitate ( $p < .0005$ ) than custodial officers, prior to FMI training.

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics for pre-training and post-training scores on each of the survey measures, by staff group

Measure	Pre-training			Post-training		
	CO	CSI	OSP	CO	CSI	OSP
	M (SD)					
Attitudes towards prisoners	20.32 (6.23)	22.53 (5.56)	29.80 (5.63)	22.86 (6.69)	25.93 (5.90)	30.95 (5.37)
Motivation to rehabilitate	19.42 (5.22)	22.04 (3.94)	25.94 (4.21)	21.82 (4.71)	24.00 (3.29)	26.36 (2.53)
Ability to rehabilitate	9.82 (3.16)	9.96 (3.03)	13.53 (2.89)	11.12 (3.18)	12.16 (2.03)	13.95 (2.24)
Organisational job demands	9.70 (5.50)	9.52 (5.36)	7.09 (5.24)	8.75 (5.68)	9.91 (5.42)	7.22 (5.38)
Operational job demands	5.72 (3.31)	5.09 (2.76)	3.69 (2.78)	5.11 (3.08)	4.91 (3.27)	3.25 (2.22)
Job stress	8.48 (4.65)	9.68 (4.55)	8.25 (4.82)	8.61 (4.82)	9.81 (5.12)	7.58 (4.60)
Job satisfaction	23.38 (5.61)	24.36 (5.26)	27.35 (5.51)	23.50 (6.34)	23.56 (6.58)	28.22 (5.13)

## How do the staff groups associate rehabilitation factors with their experiences of their jobs?

In the following section, we explored how staff groups differed in the extent to which their perceptions of rehabilitation factors, in terms of attitudes that inmates are capable of rehabilitative change as well as perceived motivation and ability to help offenders rehabilitate, were associated with their more global experiences of job satisfaction and stress while working as custodial staff. To do this, we conducted a series of bivariate correlations between scores on pre-training survey measures for each of the staff groups, with a focus on relationships between rehabilitation factors and experiences of job demands, satisfaction and stress. Results are given in Table 3.

Prior to FMI training, custodial officers showed a series of associations between rehabilitation factors and their overall experiences of their jobs. Small to moderate correlations were observed between more positive attitudes towards prisoners and reduced stress associated with organisational and operational job demands, reduced overall job stress, and increased job satisfaction. Custodial officers also showed relatively pronounced positive correlations between their perceived motivation and ability to help offenders' rehabilitation and their ratings of job satisfaction. They tended to have slightly smaller

associations between their motivation and ability for rehabilitation and lower ratings of job demands and job stress.

CSI overseers showed similar patterns of association between rehabilitation factors and perceptions of their job, albeit with generally smaller effect sizes compared to custodial officers. Overseers were particularly likely to show associations between their attitudes towards offenders and their sense of job satisfaction, as well as between their ability and motivation to help offenders rehabilitate and ratings of organisational job demands.

**Table 3.** Bivariate correlations between pre-training scores on rehabilitation factors and perceptions of job demands, stress and satisfaction, by staff group

	Organisational job demands	Operational job demands	Job stress	Job satisfaction
Attitudes towards prisoners				
Custodial officers	-.322**	-.263**	-.222**	.295**
CSI overseers	-.233*	-.194	-.109	.145
OSP staff	-.038	-.251*	-.083	.149
Motivation to rehabilitate				
Custodial officers	-.247**	-.121*	-.193**	.344**
CSI overseers	-.198	-.067	-.113	.161
OSP staff	.080	.013	.066	.012
Ability to rehabilitate				
Custodial officers	-.130**	-.056	-.160**	.244**
CSI overseers	-.176	-.033	-.028	.143
OSP staff	.020	-.090	.089	.011

Note: \* $p < .01$ ; \*\* $p < .001$

By comparison, OSP staff showed weak correlations between rehabilitation factors and their experiences of their jobs in general. The largest correlations included those between increasing attitudes towards prisoners and decreasing ratings of operational job demands, as well as increasing ratings of job satisfaction. In comparison to other staff groups, OSP staff groups showed minimal correlations between their perceived ability and motivation for rehabilitation and indices of job stress and satisfaction.

## How do staff groups differ in their responses to FMI training?

Table 2 also gives descriptive statistics for post-training scores on the survey measures across staff groups, while Table 4 gives the results of inferential statistics assessing the magnitude of change in staff scores between pre-training and post-training (for those staff who completed both surveys).

When considering each of the staff groups separately, it can be seen that custodial officers tended to report significant increases in their attitudes towards prisoners, as well as their perceived ability and motivation to help offenders rehabilitate, six weeks after FMI training compared to before training. Changes on these measures tended to be of moderate to strong effect size. On the other hand, custodial officers' average ratings of job demands, job stress and job satisfaction did not vary significantly before and after FMI training. This pattern of findings is similar to those found in previous evaluation (Barkworth et al., 2021).

CSI overseers showed a similar pattern of change to custodial officers. They reported statistically significant increases in attitudes towards prisoners, as well as perceived ability to help offenders

rehabilitate, after FMI training. Effect sizes for these increases between pre-training and post-training survey responses were among the largest observed in this study, at  $d = .80$  and  $d = .67$  respectively. Their ratings of perceived motivation to rehabilitate offenders<sup>2</sup>, as well as on measures of their job experiences, did not differ significantly between pre-training and post-training surveys.

In contrast, OSP staff who completed both pre-training and post-training surveys did not show significant differences in their responses to any of the measures before and after training, on average. While changes in their ratings tended to be positive, they were of small effect sizes and did not reach statistical significance for any of the measures.

**Table 4.** Magnitude and significance of change between pre-training scores and post-training scores on survey measures, by staff group

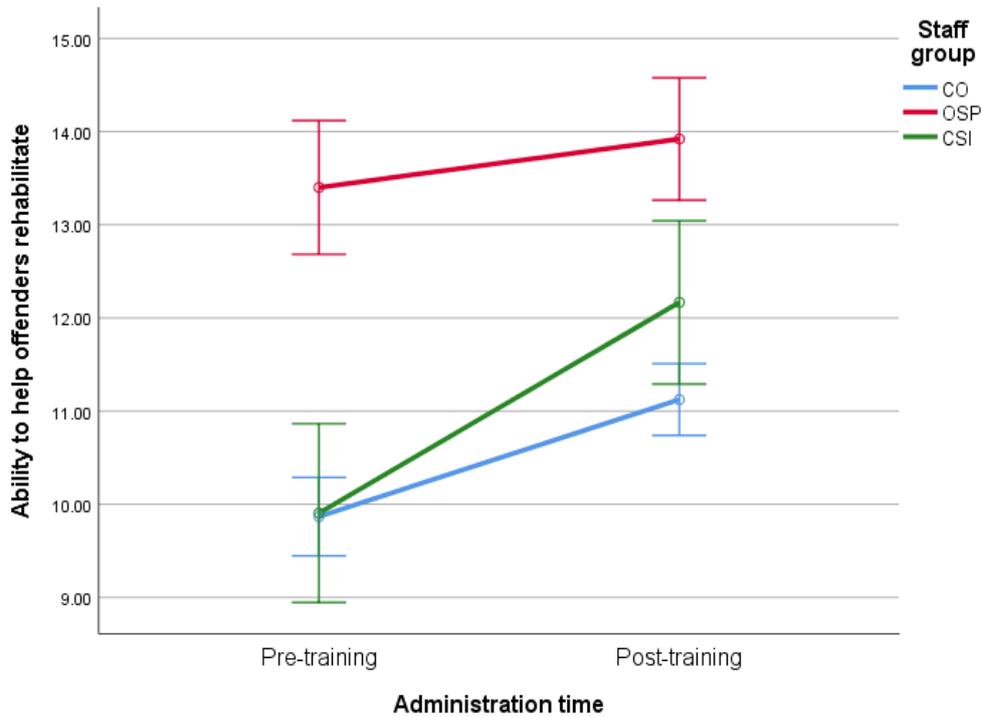
Measure	Custodial officers		CSI overseers		OSP staff	
	<i>t</i> (sig)	<i>d</i>	<i>t</i> (sig)	<i>d</i>	<i>t</i> (sig)	<i>d</i>
Attitudes towards prisoners	-4.887**	.53	-4.306**	.85	-2.252	.23
Motivation to rehabilitate	-4.771**	.54	-1.856	.50	-0.794	.11
Ability to rehabilitate	-6.012**	.43	-4.180**	.67	-1.797	.16
Organisational job demands	0.119	.23	-0.039	.09	0.638	.03
Operational job demands	0.271	.23	0.235	.06	1.320	.21
Job stress	-0.857	.03	0.516	.02	0.461	.21
Job satisfaction	1.035	.02	0.726	.17	-2.063	.28

Note: \*\*  $p < .001$ . *t* = paired sample *t*-test statistic; *d* = Cohen's *d*.

Additional analyses were conducted to examine whether the average magnitude of change in scores on the measures between pre-training and post-training surveys differed between the staff groups. To achieve this, we conducted a series of mixed-model ANOVAs for each survey measure, where survey administration time was entered as a within-subjects factor, and staff group was entered as a between-subjects factor. In these models, a significant administration time x staff group interaction is indicative of differences in the magnitude of change across staff groups, and in the interests of brevity we only report on these interaction terms.

Results of the mixed models returned a single significant interaction term, for staff perceived ability to help offenders rehabilitate ( $F = 4.52$ ;  $p < .01$ ). The direction of this interaction term is illustrated in Figure 1. It can be seen that while staff from all groups tended to show some increase in their perceived ability to help offenders rehabilitate after training, the magnitude of this effect was larger for CSI overseers compared to custodial officers and OSP staff. Administration time x staff group interaction terms for each of the other measures were not significant ( $F_s < 2.05$ ;  $p_s > .13$ ).

<sup>2</sup> We note that CSI overseers showed an average change in motivation to support offenders' rehabilitation that was of moderate - large effect size, although not statistically significant. This is likely to be a statistical artefact of the relatively low sample size for overseers who completed both pre-training and post-training surveys. Paired *t*-tests may have been unable to detect significant differences due to type II error; alternatively, biased overestimates of effect size may be more likely with smaller samples (e.g., Goulet-Pelletier & Cousineau, 2018).



**Figure 1.** Staff group by administration time interaction effect for perceived ability to support offenders' rehabilitation

## CONCLUSIONS

Implementation of FMI training across Corrective Services NSW correctional centres represents a growing appreciation that all custodial staff can contribute to offender rehabilitation and the promotion of a prison environment that enables rehabilitation (e.g., Mann et al., 2018). To best support staff in making this contribution, it is important to understand how they differ in their existing orientation towards and skills for rehabilitation; how such factors intersect with their overall experiences of their jobs; and how they may differ in response to change initiatives such as FMI, as a function of their substantive role in the prison. It is also fundamental that staff will express rehabilitative objectives in different ways and different contexts according to their roles. Recognition of the unique perspectives and circumstances of different staff groups has prompted development of tailored approaches to achieving rehabilitative goals, such as the Words @ Work complementary training for CSI overseers.

The results of this study illustrated that custodial officers, OSP staff and CSI overseers tended to differ substantially in factors associated with offender rehabilitation at baseline. OSP staff had more positive attitudes towards prisoners, as well as perceived motivation and ability to help offenders' rehabilitation, compared to other staff groups. This may be expected given that their roles routinely involve delivering behaviour change interventions that are modelled on formal rehabilitation principles.

Differences between custodial officers and CSI overseers were less pronounced. CSI overseers showed better attitudes towards offenders and motivation for rehabilitation than custodial officers, although the groups did not differ significantly in perceived ability for rehabilitation. These results suggest that overseers tend to have a stronger orientation towards rehabilitation than custodial officers; however, this may not be supported in action by their perceived skills or capacity to help offenders rehabilitate. A

similar 'pre-rehabilitative' typology characterised by disparities between rehabilitative orientation and skills has been identified in previous research (Kenny & Webster, 2015). A potential implication is that applied skills development may be a particularly important or impactful avenue of additional training and support for overseers. On the other hand, custodial officers may be more likely to require training that seeks to reconstruct their orientation towards offenders and their roles, as well as applied skills for rehabilitation.

On pre-training surveys there was a general trend whereby OSP staff also tended to give the most favourable ratings of job demands, stress and satisfaction; custodial officers gave the least favourable ratings; and CSI overseers gave similar or slightly more positive ratings than custodial officers. One notable exception was that CSI overseers reported elevated levels of job stress compared to other staff, which could act as a potential barrier to rehabilitative objectives and may benefit from further examination and support.

This pattern of results may be partly attributable to associations between having a rehabilitative orientation and improved job satisfaction and stress among custodial staff, which has been observed in previous research (e.g., Farkas, 1999; Misis et al., 2013). In the current study, custodial officers appeared to show particularly robust correlations between their pre-training attitudes towards prisoners and rehabilitation, and their overall experiences of their jobs. This has implications for the potential utility of FMI training in achieving positive outcomes for staff wellbeing and satisfaction among custodial officers, in the event that rehabilitative goals and skills are internalised (although we note that post-training gains in rehabilitative factors were not found to correspond with changes in job satisfaction or stress over the short-term). Interestingly, however, OSP staff tended to report weak associations between their ratings of rehabilitative attitudes and skills, and of their broader experiences of job satisfaction and stress. One potential explanation is that these staff had relatively consistently high rehabilitative orientations and skillsets, which limited the likelihood of covariance with their other experiences of demands and stressors within their work environment.

When comparing staff ratings on survey measures before and after training, our results were consistent with previous evaluation (Barkworth et al., 2021) in showing significant changes in orientation towards offender rehabilitation and perceived ability to help offenders rehabilitate among custodial officers. Similar results were observed for CSI overseers, and mixed-model analyses also indicated that overseers showed a particularly large magnitude of change in perceived ability for rehabilitation after FMI training, relative to other staff groups. Taking the results together, it is possible that CSI overseers had a more pronounced response to the skills acquisition component of FMI training because they had relatively positive attitudes towards prisoners and motivation for rehabilitation, or experienced a greater perceived disparity between their motivation and their ability to help offenders rehabilitate, before starting training. In this regard, it appears likely that efforts to bolster staff internalisation of rehabilitative attitudes and culture would act as an important precondition for initiatives that seek to develop and increase uptake of rehabilitative skills.

We acknowledge that this explanation of the results does not account for OSP staff, who showed minimal change after FMI training. Again, this is likely attributable to the highly developed rehabilitative orientation and skillsets at baseline that are inherent to their roles, highlighting that change initiatives may be best understood in reference to those participants who have room for improvement. Conversely, we do not intend to conclude from these results that there is no benefit in OSP staff participating in initiatives such as FMI training. Informal feedback from FMI trainers and participants has suggested that OSP staff can be instrumental in modelling advanced skills, giving insights into rehabilitative activities within correctional centres, and promoting a sense of solidarity and unity of purpose among the different staff groups.

Consistent with this, a key feature of the current Words @ Work training is to recruit OSP staff from the local centre to share information about rehabilitative concepts and language with CSI overseers.

Some limitations to this study are noted. Given the multiple subgroup analyses it was not possible to include a comparison group in this study, therefore it cannot be concluded that the observed changes in scores across surveys can be causally attributed to FMI training. Previous evaluation found sufficient evidence for a causal impact of FMI on perceived ability to help offenders' rehabilitation only (Barkworth et al., 2021). We also acknowledge that survey administrations captured change associated with initial FMI training only, and did not account for related initiatives such as delivery of Words @ Work to CSI overseers or FMI refresher training. Further, post-training measures were administered after a relatively short period of six weeks, which may explain why FMI training was not found to have impacts on more systemic perceptions of job stressors and satisfaction. CRES is currently undertaking additional studies that address these factors, in order to better understand how initiatives can support Corrective Services NSW objectives to promote a prison environment that enables rehabilitation through the contributions of all custodial staff.

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