

Information about the Reducing Reoffending Program Management Office

Premier's priorities

Reducing reoffending is one of the NSW Premier's 14 Premier's Priorities.

In 2019 a target was set to reduce adult reoffending following release from prison by five per cent by 2023.

There are five Premier's Priorities which relate to the work of the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ).

The Reducing Reoffending Program Management Office (RRPMO) supports, leads, reports on and monitors a number of projects and provides governance for the overall program of work. We work with stakeholders across all areas of the Division and we also work with stakeholders in other Divisions of DCJ and other agencies. We also work closely with the Premier's Implementation Unit (PIU).

This Grade 7/8 Project Officer role is an identified position for an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person to work on our projects across various workstreams. There is information on the RRPMO and the workstreams in the attached Information.

This position will focus on identifying opportunities to ensure the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders, including people who are in custody, are taken into account.

What we are doing

Corrective Services NSW is committed to achieving the Premier's Priority and more than 70 initiatives have been developed in direct response to the target.

The initiatives have been grouped into four key areas which we call workstreams:

1. Increase interventions to higher risk offenders
2. Support two vulnerable groups with complex needs:
 - a. Woman as parents
 - b. People leaving custody with a serious mental illness
3. Enable a rehabilitative prison culture
4. Transform rehabilitation using digital technology

These initiatives build on work started in 2016/17, which saw \$330 million invested over four years to reform:

- community-based sentences
- target priority offenders
- enhance one-on-one interactions with offenders in the community
- improve programs and case management for offenders in prison

1. Increase interventions to higher risk offenders

Focusing on what we know works best is a key part of our strategy.

This includes strengthening and increasing participation in evidence-based programs, services, treatments and supports for people in custody and in the community.

Increasing the dosage will assist inmates to address factors that contribute to offending behaviour – such as addiction – and learn pro-social strategies to change their behaviour and attitudes.

We are also increasing eligibility and significantly reducing assessment timeframes to faster place inmates in such programs, services and treatments.

For short sentence inmates, we have created new initiatives such as The Short Sentence Intensive Program to provide access to rehabilitative interventions and pre-release planning.

Reintegration into the community is critical in order support our efforts to reduce reoffending. We are now also working on developing a high level, innovative and cohesive strategy to improve how we support reintegration under this workstream.

2: Complex needs

Women as parents and people exiting custody with a serious mental illness are the two groups prioritised due to their complex needs.

Women as parents: Before entering custody the majority of women have experienced trauma, family violence and disadvantage. Their role as parents and the separation from their children caused by imprisonment, can create barriers to effective reintegration.

Stronger families and a connection with children can improve mental wellbeing, encourage a change in behaviour and improve the mindset to one of self-reflection and responsibility. We have developed a suite of initiatives to support mothers in prison including the co-location of child protection workers in women's prisons.

Serious mental illness: People with a serious mental illness are five times more likely to re-offend if there is no contact with mental health services. More than 50 consultations were held with stakeholders including Department of Communities and Justice, NSW Health, experts and academics, to develop a strategy.

One of the initiatives is the Coordinated and Continuous Care Model. People exiting custody with a serious mental illness are linked-up with the wrap-around support and services they need, including suitable accommodation, treatment and access to medication before release. We are working in collaboration with three Local Health Districts, DCJ Housing, Justice Health and Community Corrections.

Workstream 3: Rehabilitative prison culture

Desistance from crime by an individual is a complex, psychosocial process that requires among other things a permanent and positive shift in a person's identity and sense of belonging.

This change is needed to facilitate reintegration into the community and the establishment of a law-abiding lifestyle. This is more likely in a prison environment with a rehabilitative and positive culture.

All CSNSW staff can change an inmate's life through their attitude, actions and conversations. We have developed more than 20 initiatives to positively reinforce and maintain a supportive culture to encourage change. This includes the Five Minute Interventions with over 3000 staff working in prisons being trained in how to ensure every interaction / conversation they have with a inmate can contribute towards rehabilitation.

These also include the 'every contact counts' approach, which aims to turn everyday conversations into opportunities to influence people in custody. The Workplace Mentor Program links junior and existing correctional officers with senior correctional officers to role model and build strong supportive teams.

Workstream 4: Transform rehabilitation using digital technology

We have a number of projects designed to improve the way we work and introduce innovation and digital technology.

This includes offender tablet devices and increasing access to various programs and services in custody and community using technology.

Inmates spend around 16 hours a day in cells and that time can be better used for rehabilitation and preparing for reintegration.

Tablet devices were piloted at John Morony and Dillwynia correctional centres in October 2020 and rolled out at an additional 10 prisons in 2021. Further rollout is occurring in 2022 and 2023.

The devices are restricted, closely monitored and only work in cell locations. Use of the tablets is free to inmates, but inmates do pay for select services such as phone calls. The revenue funds the tablets over time.

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/premiers-priorities>