

## 12. Aboriginal Families



Aboriginal people continue to be in prison at a higher rate than non-Aboriginal people. It is important to keep in touch with your family member when they go into prison so that when they are released, coming home to their family and community will be easier.

### Identifying as Aboriginal

When your family member arrives at the prison they need to tell the person who will interview them that they identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. This will help them to access to services that are aimed at Aboriginal inmates.

When your family member is interviewed at the prison, they can tell the interviewer where their mob is from so, if possible, they can be moved to a prison close to their home and family.

### Programs for Aboriginal people in prison

There are many programs on offer to Aboriginal inmates to help them. The programs are about offending behaviour, connection to community and culture, skills and education for employment. Following is a list of programs targeted at Aboriginal inmates.

#### Balund-a Program

**Tabulam** *Bundjalung country*

This is a 'second chance' residential diversionary program for male offenders between 18-

40 years of age on a section 11 bond. The program aims to address drug and alcohol issues, anger management, education and employment, domestic violence, parenting skills and living skills. Cultural activities include excursions to sacred sites, music, dance and art. Elders employed by the program provide support and assist residents to recognise, restore and value cultural links with their land and history.

#### Yetta Dhinnakkal

**Brewarrina** *Wailwan country*

This program is available to C1, C2, C3 minimum security male inmates between the age of 18 - 30 with a fixed term of 12 months or less. Targeting first time young offenders, this program offers vocational training courses in information technology, horticulture, construction, visual arts and contemporary craft. Other practical skills, including small motor maintenance, welding, road sealing, building skills, literacy and numeracy and first aid are also provided.

## **Girrawaa Program**

### **Bathurst** *Wiradjuri country*

The Girrawaa program provides cultural, educational, vocational, workplace and business management skills for up to 14 Aboriginal male inmates, through the production of Aboriginal art and craft items for commercial sale. For C3 minimum security inmates.

## **Winhangadilinya Program**

### **Bathurst** *Wiradjuri country*

This program targets medium security Aboriginal male inmates who would not normally participate in therapeutic programs. The program includes EQUIPS, an Aboriginal specific domestic violence program, Aboriginal Culture delivered by Aboriginal teachers, a TAFE nutrition course, Aboriginal Art delivered by an Aboriginal Correctional Officer and classes on positive lifestyles, resume writing, interviewing skills, first aid and WH&S.

## **Nura Warra Umer Program**

### **Goulburn** *Gundungurra country*

The Nura Warra Umer Program has been developed to address the limited work, education and cultural knowledge available to maximum/medium security male inmates. This program offers a chance to create cultural art including hand painting, picture framing and engraving.

## **Gundi Program**

### **St Heliers** *Wonnarua country*

Gundi supports minimum security Aboriginal inmates towards a career in the Building and Construction Industry. The program comprises pre and post release training plus a wide range of support and personal development services. It is based on commercial construction work at St Heliers Prison building affordable homes for the Aboriginal Housing Office and Community Housing organisations.

## **Babiin Miyagang**

### **At most male prisons**

Provides an opportunity for Aboriginal fathers/carers who are separated from their children to gain greater understanding of their role and develop an enriched relationship with their kids. It is a strength based program giving insight and support.

## **Mothering at a Distance**

### **At all female prisons**

Helps Aboriginal mothers in prison who have children to develop better relationships with their kids. It also aims to reduce the trauma of separation.

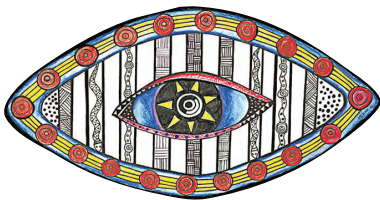
## **Bolwara Transitional House**

### **Emu Plains** *Dharug country*

Bolwara Transitional House is a residential pre-release program for Aboriginal female inmates with alcohol and other drug related problems. It is located at the

entrance of Emu Plains Prison. Minimum security women with 3-12 months left to serve can apply to Bolwara.

The residents attend AOD programs like AA, NA and other programs to help with life management and life skills. Staff at Bolwara can provide counselling and assist with housing and employment matters.



### **Bundian Way Camps**

**Eden** *Yuin/Monaro country*

This program is a cultural work camp offered to eligible Aboriginal inmates. It offers a link to culture and the local Aboriginal community by providing an opportunity to contribute to the efforts of the local Aboriginal custodians of the Bundian Way. Participants assist to preserve a culturally significant and historically important community project and can provide transitional pathways.

### **Dubay Gunyah**

This program helps Aboriginal women released from prison who are homeless or on the verge of homelessness to gain medium term accommodation with culturally appropriate wrap around services.

## **Aboriginal staff working in Corrective Services NSW**

There are over 215 Aboriginal staff working within CSNSW in custodial, support staff and education roles. If your family member is on parole in the community, contact the ACSO (Aboriginal Client Services Officer) in your area to assist with any enquiries regarding parole and Community Corrections matters. For matters relating to prisons contact the Services and Programs Officers (SAPOs) and Regional Aboriginal Project Officer (RAPOs).

### **Cultural activities for Aboriginal inmates**

Aboriginal inmates have the chance to celebrate significant cultural events whilst in prison such as NAIDOC. Some prisons invite local Aboriginal Elders and community guests to participate in the event. This enables the inmate to keep in touch with their culture and meet other Aboriginal people from the local community.

CSNSW also encourages Aboriginal Elders to provide support and guidance to inmates on a regular basis. They become the inmates' contact with the Aboriginal community. The Pinta Kulpi Elders program runs at specific prisons. Elders provide spiritual, emotional and social support and assistance to inmates

which may help them when they get out of prison.

## Attending funerals (Sorry Business)

CSNSW recognises the importance of Aboriginal families and kinship. In the event of a death in the family (Sorry Business), please contact the prison where your family member is located and speak with the SAPO.

There is a process for approval to attend a funeral of a family member. Pass on information about the funeral arrangements to the SAPO as soon as possible so the process can begin.

Sometimes due to the inmate's offence, community consideration or the distance to travel to the funeral, your family member may not be approved to attend.

## Keeping in touch with mob

It is important to keep in touch with your mob when they are in prison. They may have feelings of shame and regret, so it helps to have someone stay in touch. There are many different ways to keep in touch. You both can write letters, they can call you from the inmate phone (at certain times of the day) or you can visit them on visits day or through video link (see p.50). CSNSW can also give some financial help if you are

travelling from far away and you are on a Centrelink benefit. **See p.78** for information about Travel and Accommodation Assistance.

## Keeping yourself strong after family is released

It is a big responsibility for anyone to take care of someone once they are released from prison. We all have our own lives and cannot be there with your family all the time to give them all of the support they may need. It is a good idea to offer your support, but also accept assistance from professionals who are skilled in this field. Aboriginal Men's and Aboriginal Women's groups or support services offer cultural support and it is usually amongst other people who have been through the same situation like being in prison. The inmate can ask their SAPO or Community Corrections Officer for more information on this.

If your family member has alcohol or other drug problems, they would be best to stay on track in a rehab if required. Sometimes when they return home things can go back to the bad ways before they were inside. This places a lot of pressure on the family and the local community. It is not your responsibility to stop someone from taking drugs and/or drinking, AOD counsellors are trained to do that job. You need to stay strong yourself and keep your life on track.

## Need help with Aboriginal services?

### Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) Ltd



ALS is an Aboriginal community organisation giving information and referral, legal advice and court representation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, women and children across NSW and ACT. Head Office Parramatta **8842 8000**  
[www.alsnswact.org.au](http://www.alsnswact.org.au)

Armidale .....	<b>6772 5770</b>
Bathurst .....	<b>6331 1255</b>
Bourke .....	<b>6872 2200</b>
Broken Hill .....	<b>8087 3233</b>
Canberra.....	<b>6249 8488</b>
Dubbo.....	<b>6882 6880</b>
Grafton .....	<b>6640 1400</b>
Griffith.....	<b>6962 7675</b>
Kempsey .....	<b>6562 5990</b>
Lismore.....	<b>6622 7088</b>
Moree .....	<b>6752 5700</b>
Moruya .....	<b>4474 2400</b>
Newcastle.....	<b>4926 1571</b>
Nowra .....	<b>4422 3255</b>
Parramatta.....	<b>8842 8000</b>
Redfern.....	<b>8303 6600</b>
Tamworth.....	<b>6761 3766</b>
Taree .....	<b>6551 3928</b>
Wagga Wagga .....	<b>6921 9230</b>
Wollongong .....	<b>4225 7977</b>

### Aboriginal Strategy and Policy Unit (ASPU)

The Aboriginal Strategy and Policy Unit (ASPU) is located in the Corrective Services NSW Head Office in Sydney. They provide advice to CSNSW management regarding Aboriginal offenders in prison and in the community.

**8346 1911**

[www.justice.nsw.gov.au](http://www.justice.nsw.gov.au)

### Wurringa Baiya



### Aboriginal Women's Legal Centre

Free legal advice for Aboriginal women for issues relating to domestic violence and victim's compensation, sexual assault and child sexual assault.

**9569 3847**

**1800 686 587** (from outside Sydney)

[www.wurringabaiya.org.au](http://www.wurringabaiya.org.au)

### Women's Legal Resources Centre



Provides free legal advice, information and referral on all aspects of the law and its affects on women.

**9749 5333**

**1800 801 501** (outside Sydney)

**1800 639 784** (Aboriginal women)

[www.wlsnsw.org.au](http://www.wlsnsw.org.au)

## Aboriginal specific rehab, medical and healing centres

There are many Aboriginal specific medical centres and healing services throughout NSW. Some are listed here. For more listings go to the Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council website or call them for help.

9212 4777

[www.ahmrc.org.au/members.html](http://www.ahmrc.org.au/members.html)

### The Glen Centre



Chittaway Point near Wyong

4388 6360

[www.theglencentre.org.au](http://www.theglencentre.org.au)

### Orana Haven

Brewarrina

6874 4983

[www.](http://www.oranahaven.com.au)

[oranahaven.com.au](http://www.oranahaven.com.au)



### Benelong's Haven

Kinchela Creek near Kempsey

6567 4880

[www.benelongshaven.com.au](http://www.benelongshaven.com.au)

### Weigelli Centre

Cowra

6345 1803

[www.weigellcentre.com.au](http://www.weigellcentre.com.au)



### Wiimpatja Healing Centre

Mallee District, near Wentworth

03 5018 4100

[www.mdas.org.au](http://www.mdas.org.au)

### Jarrah House

Little Bay near

La Perouse,

Sydney

9661 6555

[www.jarrahouse.com.au](http://www.jarrahouse.com.au)



**Jarrah House**

Residential treatment facility for women

### Yula-Punaal Education & Healing Aboriginal Corporation

Mandalong

4977 2863

### Namatjira Haven

Alstonville near

Lismore

6628 1098



### Oolong House

Nowra

4422 0644

[www.oolong@shoalhaven.net.au](mailto:www.oolong@shoalhaven.net.au)



**Oolong**

strong roots  
strong spirit