

PIR Region:	Brisbane North
Date:	02/12/2014 – 14/04/2015
Key issue(s)	It was identified that clients with severe and persistent mental health issues were often being released from prison without any ongoing supports in place. In addition, there is a lack of discharge / transition planning options for prisoners who have multiple special needs (Chronic mental health issues, developmental delays/disability) who live in the Redcliffe area.
Main Objective(s)	Meet with involved parties to discuss the coordination and/or development of processes and protocols around the transitioning of discharged prisoners with suitable services
Summary of Impact or Result	<p>KEY IMPACTS –</p> <p>Following the formation of an advisory group and identification of key client needs, the following results were achieved in terms of system reform:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Probation and Parole to be provided with, and follow up if need be, pre-release transition plans from Corrections. * Centrelink to provide written confirmation of entitlements and discuss with management how best to ensure such documentation is accepted by external parties. Dedicated Prison Liaison Officer to be included in pre-release transition plans and ensure that Newstart and DSP applications are processed prior to release (Note: allowance for early release complications). * Woodford Correctional Transitions Officers to revisit past resource guide that was developed for prisoners to use prior to release. Commitment given to try to ensure all prisoners exit the system with a copy of their birth certificate – Corrections unable to absorb the cost but commitment given to encourage prisoners to save for this over a period of time prior to release.
Context	
Stakeholders/Partnerships	<p>An advisory group was established which included:</p> <p>Aftercare PIR: Department of Corrective Services; Probation & Parole; Centrelink; Department of Housing; QMerit; IUIH; Openminds; Neami National; OARS/Mission Australia; Buranga Widjong Justice Group; HYPAR; Spectrum; QPS; HELP Enterprises; Kerri-Anne Dooley LNP; Uniting Care; Indigenous representatives Norman Hegarty and Gene Blow, RFQ, Catholic Prison Ministry.</p>
Project Management	
Method used:	<p>A project proposal was developed with the three phase project to be run over a six to twelve month period. Phase 1 of the project focussed on researching models of practice that are targeted at similar profiled groups.</p> <p>Phase 2 focussed on data collection from PIR and partner agencies through the forming of a working/advisory group, facilitation of meetings and by seeking input/feedback from involved parties.</p> <p>Phase 3 of the project focussed on implementing the recommendations of the advisory group.</p>
Issues identified:	

While all stakeholders showed a genuine commitment to bringing about change in this area, resource and workload issues impacted on some agencies capacity to implement the required changes. Further, endeavouring to make even small practice changes within the government agency sector (i.e., timely release of info and cross-sector information sharing provisions) proved difficult.

For example -

- Current transition/reintegration program (ORSS) cannot match services to client needs due to capacity issues (average caseload 150) and lack of appropriate services to meet client needs.
- Pre-release planning occurs on an adhoc basis and there is currently no user friendly 'resource' available for prisoners which can help them to find their way around services.
- No follow up with mental health services.
- Parole officers are often the only support provided on release.
- Prisoners require a Centrelink income statement to apply for Department of Housing rental properties, bond loans and rental grants. Centrelink cannot generate a copy of this until the day of release. Centrelink can provide a written statement which contains all relevant information, however the Department of Housing does not recognise this document.
- Prisoners who are released without a current driving license or passport have difficulty accessing services due to lack of acceptable identification. For example, when they present to Department of Transport to get a driver's license they do not have enough identification to start the process. The same issue arises when opening bank accounts, applying for private rentals or hiring goods.
- Applications for bond loans and rental grants cannot be finalised until a prisoner is released - tenancies cannot be finalised until these loans/grants are approved. This can leave prisoners homeless for a period after release - the burden of being homeless arguably impacts on recidivism and re-incarceration rates.

Description of Activities	
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Key expected outcomes and actual outcomes:

- Clarification of the exact needs of the profile group – outcome achieved
- Involved agencies to implement recommended changes – partially achieved. Practice changes implemented via Probation and Parole; Centrelink; and Corrections. Identified issues with Department of Housing remain unresolved as they did not attend advisory group meetings.

Project Impact	
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Agency commitments:

- Probation and Parole to be provided with, and follow up if need be, pre-release transition plans.
- Centrelink to provide written confirmation of entitlements and discuss with management how best to ensure such documentation is accepted by external parties. Dedicated Prison Liaison Officer to be included in pre-release transition plans and ensure that Newstart and DSP applications are processed prior to release (Note: allowance for early release complications).
- Woodford Correctional Transitions Officers to revisit past resource guide that was developed for prisoners to use prior to release. Commitment given to try to ensure all prisoners exit the system with a copy of their birth certificate – Corrections unable to absorb the cost but commitment given to encourage prisoners to save for this over a period of time prior to release. Note: additional meetings with management on the 8th and 16th April further endorsed Corrections commitment to developing more timely transition plans for prisoners who live with a mental illness.
- HYPAR were able to commit to offering ongoing support in the form of mentoring and practical assistance (transport, accommodation and job search assistance etc) however they are a non-funded body that would require financial input to cover their costs.

Lessons Learned	
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- The project was not funded, rather costs associated with meetings were absorbed in to general office costings.
- More time to engage with Department of Housing may have benefitted the project in terms of

outcomes

- Difficulties coordinating the large number of involved parties to meet regularly.
- The commitment of those engaged parties proved fruitful
- The most critical element that led to significant change was the commitment of workers who have first-hand working knowledge of this client group
- Having shared clients across a number of agencies led to a collective understanding of need and commitment to addressing those needs for the wider community

Appendices	