Dear Commissioner,

Re: Inquiry into imprisonment and recidivism

As a prison operator in the state of Queensland, Serco supports the Commission’s current inquiry into imprisonment and recidivism. Via our partnership with Queensland Corrective Services, we are not only committed to providing those in our care with a safe and secure environment, but more importantly, our approach is underpinned by our mission to help prisoners to become responsible citizens, and ultimately, to reduce rates of reoffending upon release.

Together with our customers and community partners, Serco seeks to ensure that all individuals are afforded a tailored correctional journey. We know, from experience, it is critical that people in prison are equipped with lifelong coping mechanisms to return to the community and avoid relapse. Coupled with this, it is vital that they are thoughtfully introduced to, and begin to engage with, various community-based organisations who will continue to provide adequate support and opportunities throughout their reintegration phase. We promote and contribute to this ‘through-the-gate’ model because we know that holistic and ongoing support is what changes lives for the better, and is subsequently what reduces post-release crime, in the short and long term.

Our goal is for Serco Officers, within a prison setting, to be efficient and effective and to work well with prisoners to determine their post-release needs. That being said, we do not overlook the fact that upon release, unless constructive relationships have been formed with local and specialised partners, a former prisoner is likely to feel isolated and will be highly susceptible to facing common barriers, including but not limited to homelessness, unemployment and a lack of connection to family, community and culture.

There are particular groups affected by the criminal justice system, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and women, who deserve a customised process driven by positive and sustainable protective factors, that are aligned to the specific needs of themselves and their families. For all people in prison, especially the most complex and vulnerable, we believe that an upfront investment must be made. This means that we as a service provider should ensure we are proactive rather than reactive, and that by rehabilitating people as early as possible, we deliver both social and economic benefits.

As the Commission has stated, the number of people in Queensland prisons has risen by more than 50 per cent in the last five years, and more than half of prisoners return to custody within two years. We are equally concerned about these figures, and seek to work with Government and draw from our operational experience to improve them. Over the years, via our work across Australia, we have found that a safe and secure facility is a fundamental baseline, and over and
above that, rehabilitation and effective reintegration is what we should collectively be aspiring to achieve.

We are proud of our approach and subsequent success. With that in mind, we are pleased to share with the Commission a recent piece of external research that evaluated Serco’s approach to rehabilitation and our rates of reoffending over a five-year period at Wandoon Reintegration Facility in Western Australia. Throughout 2012 to 2018, Serco managed this facility, which housed young adult men (aged 18-28 years) who for the most part, were serial recidivists in the WA prison system. Upon closure of this facility, in April 2018, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) published a report titled 'Reducing Reoffending: The Impact of the Wandoon Reintegration Model'. It has been revealed that Serco, as operator, helped achieve the following:

- A recidivism rate of close to half of the national average: 28.2 per cent of Wandoon residents returned to custody within two years of release, compared to a national average of 44.8 per cent;
- 100 per cent of Wandoon residents were released into training and/or employment; and
- 100 per cent of Wandoon residents were released into safe and affordable accommodation.

The attached report, in full, analyses Serco’s approach, and the key desistance factors that led to a true ‘through-the-gate’ reintegration model that helped achieved the above outcomes.

Whilst we recognise that rehabilitation and reintegration must respond to local needs, specific to unique cohorts, there are transferrable aspects of our model that will benefit all people in prison. With a confirmation that our work at Wandoon significantly reduced reoffending, we know that every correctional journey needs to value certain pathways, including safe and affordable housing, a restored or newly attained connection to family and culture, effective relapse prevention strategies, and training and employment advancements that will ensure an individual become increasingly independent and empowered.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our approach, and more widely, thank you for the meaningful work you are undertaking via this inquiry into imprisonment and recidivism.

If you wish to discuss this matter further please do not hesitate to contact me on [contact information] or by email at [email].

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Paul Shaw
Strategy Director - Justice
Serco Australia
Reducing Reoffending: The impact of the Wandoo Reintegration Model

Reducing Reoffending: The impact of the Wandoo Reintegration Model | April 2018

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Reducing Reoffending – The impact of the Wandoo Reintegration Model

The Wandoo Reintegration Facility is a minimum security for men aged 18-28 years. The facility is privately operated by Serco Australia under contract from the Western Australian Government (WA).

The Wandoo Reintegration Facility employs a tailored rehabilitation and reintegration model that has been developed based on empirical evidence of desistance factors that influence reoffending, including employment, education, accommodation and housing, sobriety, self-advocacy and a sense of community. The Wandoo Reintegration Model (the ‘Wandoo Model’) aims to assist young offenders in the critical period of transition from custody to the community by addressing the underlying issues and desistance factors, as opposed to solely addressing offending behaviours that were the catalyst for imprisonment.

The Wandoo Model, managed by Serco Australia, is delivered in partnership with the not-for-profit sector, specifically Mission Australia and Save the Children, providing personal and individual support throughout the resident’s stay at Wandoo and three months post-release into the community to ensure a seamless transition. As of 1 May 2018, the Wandoo Reintegration Facility will transition back to the public sector and will be operated by the WA Department of Justice.

The outcomes achieved through the delivery of the Wandoo Model have been identified through:

• A quantitative assessment that compares the reduction in recidivism of Wandoo on a state, national and international level. Data for the quantitative assessment has been provided by Serco Australia and sourced through a desktop literature review. Access to contractually mandated reports submitted to Corrections WA was granted by Serco Australia for the purpose of this assessment.

• A qualitative analysis of the benchmark outcomes of the reintegration model using the main desistance factors. The qualitative assessment has been conducted through a series of workshops with Wandoo Reintegration Facility and Mission Australia employees and verified through consultation with ex-residents of the facility.

This assessment determined that the recidivism rate for Wandoo Reintegration Facility was 28.2 per cent for 2016/17.¹ The comparable national recidivism rate across all correctional facility types, within two years of release, is 44.8 per cent.² The low recidivism rate for Wandoo has been achieved despite the target group displaying a higher number of predictive risk indicators for recidivism than the national average. However, it is acknowledged that the Wandoo Model is not applicable across the total Australian population, with more serious offences requiring different approaches to incarceration and rehabilitation.

The Wandoo Model supports resident’s ability to address the key desistance factors through the provision of:

• Employment strategies and education and training programs that support the release of 100 per cent of residents into employment or education and training.

• Housing and accommodation strategies to ensure all Wandoo residents are release into confirmed, stable accommodation, including Indigenous housing and ongoing culturally appropriate support.

• Access to drug and alcohol programs to arm residents with the tools to maintain sobriety post-release, primarily through evidence based relapse prevention programs.

• Counselling, relationship programs and parental programs to support restoration of family roles and reconnection of relationships with parents, partners and children.

• A ‘responsible prisoner’ philosophy that aims at arming residents with the life skills and personal responsibility required to be a functioning member of society post-release.

• Connection for Indigenous residents with their heritage through the provision of traditional ceremonies and cultural events, Indigenous peer support and counsellors, use of local language for the maintenance of ties with the Indigenous community.

It is acknowledged that the costs of delivering rehabilitation and reintegration models in correctional facilities can be seen as costly. However, there is some evidence from the Wandoo Model that these models provide broader benefits of recidivism to the community. It is recommended that an assessment is conducted on the economic and social impacts of this reduced recidivism to determine if they outweigh the costs of the model delivery.

Where this model is implemented in future, it is recommended that more longitudinal data be collected on ex-resident’s experience post-release to provide a longer-term view of the benefits of the model. In particular, the capture of employment, education and training, accommodation, drug and alcohol use and family restoration status of ex-residents be collected, in conjunction with recidivism data. The capturing of these metrics would support the valuation of the economic and social benefits of reduced recidivism to the community.

² The Wandoo Reintegration Facility recidivism rate is based on returned to custody within two years for those in WRF for greater than 3 months applicable to both releases and returning offenders.

¹ The state and national recidivism rates are based on ex-resident released following a term of sentenced imprisonment following release within two years of release.

28.2% Recidivism rate for Wandoo Reintegration Facility in 2016/17.
Reducing Reoffending

1.1 Wandoo Reintegration Facility

The Wandoo Reintegration Facility is a minimum security prison located in Murdoch, Western Australia (WA). The facility was established in 2008 for men aged 18-28 years, accommodating 77 beds. Residents of Wandoo are transitioning from medium or other minimum security facilities to the community, or via direct pathways from sentencing or remand prior to release (for minimum security sentences less than 12 months). The establishment of the facility originated from a WA Government election commitment to deliver target justice services to the 18 to 24 age group. A particular focus was placed on reducing reoffending and facilitating reintegration into the community, given the 70 per cent reoffending rate in this target group at that time.

Since 2012, the facility has been privately operated by Serco Australia under contract from the WA Government. As of 1 May 2018, the facility will transition back to the public sector and will be operated by the WA Department of Justice.

1.2 The Wandoo Reintegration Model

The Wandoo Reintegration Facility employs a tailored operating model and philosophy with the aim of assisting young offenders in the critical period of transition from custody to the community. The Wandoo Reintegration Model (the Wandoo Model) has been developed based on empirical evidence of desistance factors that influence reoffending, including employment, education, accommodation and housing, sobriety, self-advocacy and a sense of community. The Wandoo Model is based on the idea that through addressing the desistance factors, residents are less likely to reoffend.

The Wandoo Model, managed by Serco, is delivered in partnership with the non-for-profit sector, including Mission Australia and Save the Children amongst others, and other carefully selected community organisations with the capacity to (respond to cohort needs in real time) for a minimum of three months post-release. The key phases of the Wandoo Reintegration Model are presented in Figure 1.

1.3 Purpose of this study

In 2016, the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (OTICS) released a report titled Inspection of Wandoo Reintegration Facility. The report concluded that the Wandoo Reintegration Facility is a success story in the rehabilitation and reintegration of young male prisoners, with value delivered through:

- a coherent and purposeful philosophy that is supported by staff and which permeates all areas of the centre’s operations
- a strong multi-disciplinary approach to managing and supporting residents
- a model that is based on personal responsibility, positive reinforcement and genuine opportunities for rehabilitation
- sustained and targeted partnerships with the not-for-profit sector
- work opportunities for residents leading to post-release employment
- Serco’s willingness to respond, innovate and improve.

The OTICS report acknowledges ‘the Wandoo offending management model as the best in the state’ which should be ‘used as a benchmark for other state facilities’. One of the key recommendations to arise from this report was the need for an assessment of the impact of Wandoo’s rehabilitation and reoffending rates.

This study provides a more detailed understanding of the benefits that the reintegration model in place at Wandoo provides. This includes the benchmarking of recidivism rates at Wandoo against state, national and international comparisons and identification of the benefits associated with desistance factors provided through the Wandoo Reintegration model.

Figure 1: Wandoo Reintegration Model Overview

- **Orientation**
  - Upon arrival at Wandoo
  - Orientation to the facility provided by other residents to ensure a resident-led approach to life in Wandoo
  - Meet representatives from all departments
  - Assessment questionnaire provided to new residents to assess strengths and weaknesses, including employment history, mental health, drug and alcohol use, support network, family, financial, etc.

- **Preparation**
  - 6 months prior to release
  - Meetings with reintegration officers to develop reintegration plan, mapping out needs for literacy, fitness level, health needs, training requirements, family or personal requirements (update every six weeks in the facility).
  - Tourism/Recreation, Occupational Health and Safety training, barista training, etc.
  - Undertake sports and recreation, health activities, community programs and work/training

- **Foundation**
  - 3-6 months prior to release
  - Start doing foundation programs, including white cards, Responsible Service of Alcohol, forklift license, senior first aid training, food service training, Occupational Health and Safety training, barista training, etc.
  - Develop pathways to address weak domains.

- **Reintegration**
  - 0-3 months post-release
  - Section 95 activities are available (earned privileges), restorative justice (garding for the police, aboriginal community, repair/offset training, recreation)
  - Departure courses and individual counselling
  - Family offending and reconnection
  - Develop first week out plan

- **Support**
  - 0-3 months post-release
  - Facilitate access to health services 24 hours post-release
  - Support access to drug and alcohol rehabilitation
  - Support access to employment
  - Support access to domestic violence rehabilitation
  - Support access to indigenous housing
  - Support access to transitional housing
  - Support family resolution through case workers
  - Weekly phone contact to provide transition support and mentoring
  - Provide exit interview at 6 months to identify success factors

Wando is the first facility in WA dedicated to addressing the specific needs of young offenders, offering intensive case management with a strong reintegration focus. While transitional officers are available at all other corrective facilities in WA pre-release, the intensive focus on individualised case management and one-on-one support, both within Wandoo and post-release, is not available elsewhere within the WA corrective services.

The Wandoo Model is built on three core values, known as the three ‘R’s:

- **Restorative Justice**: The model seeks to improve the resident’s concept of themselves and their role identity through the provision of a supportive, encouraging environment with strong boundaries and providing an environment for self-improvement.

- **Responsible Prisoner**: The model aims at equipping residents with the required life skills, self-advocacy and personal responsibility for seamless transition to post-prison life. For example, residents are responsible for undertaking 30 hours of work per week, they are responsible for making appointments through kiosks in each accommodation wing, cooking their own meals, etc.

- **Relationships**: The model seeks to improve the way residents establish and maintain important relationships. The model’s underlying philosophy is to treat each individual with respect. The flat structure implemented at the facility helps to establish trust and build a community. This enables the residents to learn how to function within communities, be responsible for their behaviours and learn how to heal relationships.

2 Impact on recidivism

2.1 Assessment approach

The approach adopted for the assessment of outcomes achieved through the delivery of the Wandoo Reintegration Model includes:

- A quantitative assessment that compares the reduction in recidivism of Wandoo on a state, national and international level. Data for the quantitative assessment has been provided by Serco Australia or sourced through a desktop literature review. Access to contractually mandated reports submitted to Corrections WA was granted by Serco Australia for the purpose of this assessment.

- A qualitative analysis of the benchmark outcomes of the Wandoo Model using the main desistance factors in reoffending. The qualitative assessment has been conducted through a series of workshops with Wandoo Reintegration Facility and Mission Australia employees and verified through consultation with a small sample of ex-residents of the facility.

2.2 Recidivism results

Recidivism refers to the reoffending rates of convicted criminals. There are a number of methods for estimating recidivism, depending on the definitions applied. Recidification can refer to the committing of a new offence but this is difficult to measure as it would require offenders to self-report whether they have committed an offence irrelevant of whether they were caught or not. The most common measure of recidivism is estimated through the re-entering of the correctional system. This method is limited as it may miss those who have committed offences and have not been caught or have been diverted through the correctional system through other means. This means that those offenders subject to penalties such as fines, community coroners orders or suspended sentences would not be captured.

For the purpose of this study, in an attempt to reflect the way justice departments across all states perceive recidivism, recidivism has been defined as the return to the correctional system, within two years of release from a correctional facility.

The recidivism rate for Wandoo Reintegration Facility was 28.2 per cent for 2016/17. The comparable national recidivism rate across all correctional facility types, within two years of release, is 44.8 per cent.

There are a number of potential predictors of reoffending, including gender, age, Indigenous heritage, length of sentence, prior imprisonments and offence type. The recidivism rate at Wandoo Reintegration Facility should be considered in light of these predictors when comparing against state and national averages.

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Case Study: Doncaster Alliance Model Recidivism Results

HMP Doncaster is a private men’s prison in Doncaster in South Yorkshire, England and is operated by Serco. Between 1 October 2011 and 30 September 2014, a Payment by Results contract was piloted at the prison, with the aim to deliver better outcomes for the public at the same or reduced costs.

This pilot involved the implementation of the Alliance model delivered through an alliance between Serco and Catch22, a local not-for-profit organisation. This model shifted the delivery of support services from a reactive to proactive approach driven by case management, regardless of sentence length or level of risk. Case management involved tailored support packages and provision of custody-based interventions. The case managers used a case management system to identify the support needs of each offender and included an assessment of needs for ten desistance factors identified by the Alliance: accommodation; education; training and employment; health and wellbeing; addiction; children and families; finance, benefits and debt; attitudes, thinking and behaviour; immigration and legal status; social capital; and Veterans in Custody eligibility. Offenders were provided a community based case manager that met with them six to eight weeks prior to release and then supported them in the transition and three to 12 months post-release through the provision of information and access to employment, housing and other support services.

The Doncaster pilot saw a reduction in recidivism from 58.0 (October 2012 to September 2013) to 54.6 per cent (January 2009 to December 2009) or a 3.4 per cent reduction in recidivism, with the national recidivism rate falling from 53.1 to 52.8 per cent over the same period or a 0.5 per cent reduction in recidivism.

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1 Serco data provided for this analysis. Recidivism Data 2012-2017, unpublished.
3 The Wandoo Reintegration Facility, recidivism rate is based on returned to custody within two years for those in WP for greater than 3 months applicable to both release and returning offenders.
4 The state and national recidivism rates are based on prisoners released following a term of sentenced imprisonment following release within two years of release.
6 The comparable national recidivism rate falling from 53.1 to 52.8 per cent over the same period or a 0.5 per cent reduction in recidivism.
7 The Doncaster pilot saw a reduction in recidivism from 58.0 (October 2012 to September 2013) to 54.6 per cent (January 2009 to December 2009) or a 3.4 per cent reduction in recidivism, with the national recidivism rate falling from 53.1 to 52.8 per cent over the same period or a 0.5 per cent reduction in recidivism.
8 Recidivism refers to the reoffending rates of convicted criminals. There are a number of methods for estimating recidivism, depending on the definitions applied. Recidification can refer to the committing of a new offence but this is difficult to measure as it would require offenders to self-report whether they have committed an offence irrelevant of whether they were caught or not. The most common measure of recidivism is estimated through the re-entering of the correctional system. This method is limited as it may miss those who have committed offences and have not been caught or have been diverted through the correctional system through other means. This means that those offenders subject to penalties such as fines, community coroners orders or suspended sentences would not be captured.
9 For the purpose of this study, in an attempt to reflect the way justice departments across all states perceive recidivism, recidivism has been defined as the return to the correctional system, within two years of release from a correctional facility.
Table 1 presents some of the potential predictors of reoffending, the corresponding characteristics of Wandoo residents and benchmarking of these characteristics at the national level.

Based on these predictors of recidivism, Wandoo’s recidivism rate would be expected to be adversely impacted by the young male population, the indigenous profile of residents and length and type of sentence; but lower given prior convictions.

As the magnitude of the impact of these predictors on recidivism is not known, the overall impact of these predictors on recidivism cannot be estimated. However, despite the number of predictors that would expect a recidivism rate higher than the national average, the recidivism rate at Wandoo is significantly lower than the national average and this may be the result of Wandoo Model.

It is acknowledged that the rehabilitation and reintegration model implemented at Wandoo is not applicable across the total Australian prisoner population, with more serious offences requiring different approaches to incarceration and rehabilitation.

### Table 1: Comparison to other facilities

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<th>Key Impacts on Recidivism</th>
<th>Wandoo Characteristics</th>
<th>National Comparison</th>
<th>Potential impact on recidivism at Wandoo compared to national average</th>
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<tr>
<td>During the 10 years after release, men are more likely than women to return to prison</td>
<td>Wandoo Reintegration Facility residents are male</td>
<td>92% of Australian prisoners are male</td>
<td>Predictor would assume that the recidivism rate would be higher than the national average</td>
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<td>Younger prisoners are more likely than older prisoners to be re-imprisoned following release</td>
<td>Wandoo Reintegration Facility residents are aged between 18-28 years</td>
<td>The median for Australian prisoners is 34.5 years</td>
<td>Predictor would assume that the recidivism rate would be higher than the national average</td>
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<td>The recidivism rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within 10 years of release was around 1.7 times that of non-Indigenous people</td>
<td>37% of residents are of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background</td>
<td>27.4% of Australian prisoners are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island background</td>
<td>Predictor would assume that the recidivism rate would be higher than the national average</td>
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<td>Prisons that experienced longer sentences are less likely to reoffend</td>
<td>Average sentence is 5 months</td>
<td>The average sentence length in Australia is 3.7 years</td>
<td>Predictor would assume that the recidivism rate would be higher than the national average</td>
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<td>Recidivism rates of prisoners property offences are Higher</td>
<td>29.4% of residents were committed for property offences</td>
<td>13% of Australian prisoners were committed for property offences**</td>
<td>Predictor would assume that the recidivism rate would be higher than the national average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prisons with prior terms of imprisonment are more likely to reoffend</td>
<td>9% of residents have prior convictions</td>
<td>56.5% of Australian prisoners have prior convictions**</td>
<td>Predictor would assume that the recidivism rate would be lower than the national average</td>
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2.3 Desistence factors

Offending behaviour is influenced by a wide range of complex factors, many of which are outside the scope of services of traditional correctional services. The Wandoo Model seeks to support resident’s ability to address the key desistence factors with the aim of reducing re-offending. The key desistence factors that are targeted through the Wandoo Model include:

- Employment, education and training
- Accommodation and housing
- Family and relationships
- Sobriety
- Self-advocacy
- Sense of community

The impact that the Wandoo Model has on recidivism can be assessed through the impact they have on these desistence factors. This is explored further in the following sections.

2.3.1 Employment, education and training

Employment is considered to have significant impact on recidivism, with offenders obtaining and maintaining employment upon release less likely to reoffend. Given that approximately 50 per cent of Wandoo’s residents have never been employed prior to incarceration, education and training programs play an important role in preparing residents for employment post-release.

Employment strategies for residents focus on the industries that align with the abilities of residents and what is possible with a criminal record. A range of programs are provided to support residents in acquiring key skills and training required for employment, including forklift licenses, barista training, industry white card (health and safety) training, responsible service of alcohol training, etc.

Serco and Mission Australia also have established arrangements with mining organisations and local hospitality businesses to provide employment pathways post release. The services also provide support for residents in successfully gaining employment through employment agencies and open vacancies.

Residents are prepared for employment post-release through the provision of a job within the facility, including set working hours and roles. Jobs that the residents take on around the facility also provide skills that support employment such as working in the facility kitchen or ground keeping.

All residents of Wandoo are released into employment, education or training, as is the Mission Australia mandate. In 2017, 56 per cent of the residents released to employment, education or training on exiting the facility were still employed or studying three months post release**.
Reducing Reoffending

198 residents have participated in alcohol abuse programs

449 residents have participated in drug programs since 2012

2.3.2 Accommodation and housing

Housing stability provides physical and financial security, greater social inclusion, greater feelings of stability and control and increased well-being and has been found to be a key factor in reducing recidivism 16.

All Wandoo residents are released into confirmed, stable accommodation. This may include returning to family or friends but more often accommodation in the form of social or transitional housing. Where release to reside with family or friends is not a preferred outcome for family, Wandoo and Mission Australia support the resident in helping them navigate the relationship implications and the mediation of housing arrangements.

Indigenous housing and support is available for Indigenous offenders for up to 2 years post-release through partnerships with Outcare. Outcare is a not-for-profit provider of rehabilitation services in Western Australia and work with Wandoo to support residents in finding steady accommodation post-release.

2.3.3 Drug and alcohol sobriety

There are well-established links between drug and alcohol use and recidivism, in particular use of hard drugs and heavy or binge drinking17. Reducing drug and alcohol dependence has a significant impact on reducing reoffending. Whilst in the facility, Wandoo provides access to drug and alcohol abuse programs to arm residents with the tools to maintain sobriety post-release. A total of 198 residents have participated in alcohol abuse programs and 449 residents have participated in drug programs since 201213.

Access to external drug and alcohol programs post-release is provided through Mission Australia. Through these programs, community advocates from alcoholics and narcotics anonymous have visited the residents to talk through their experiences with sobriety and provide mentoring for the residents.

Through speaking with an ex-resident, it was noted that these programs enabled them to identify behaviours that led to drug/alcohol use and change their perception of addictive substance use. This program was attributed as having a material impact on the ex-residents choice to maintain sobriety post-release, as one example.

The Wandoo Reintegration Facility has zero tolerance to drugs and alcohol. A key performance indicator of the facility is the percentage of random urine sample tests identifying a positive test result. In 2017, less than 0.1 per cent of urine samples were found to be positive17. This total sobriety rule supports residents with a foundation required to support them post-release.

2.3.4 Family and relationships

Maintaining social ties to family has a positive impact on reducing reoffending18. The restoration of family roles and reconnection of relationships with parents, partners and children creates social capital that is shown to reduce recidivism.

Wandoo offers a range of programs to support family reconciliation, including parenting skills programs, home visits and family days. A number of Wandoo residents are parents and these programs support the improvement of family relationships. Consultation with an ex-resident indicated that Wandoo encourage family support and building a relationship with family.

Wandoo encourages parents to engage with their families and children by inviting them to playgroups and family days at the facility or local libraries. This is commonly the time where residents reconnect to their children, given their separation or prior drug use, and attachment can form that the residents don’t want to lose post-release. In addition, Wandoo provides support navigating the state care or family court system.

Consultation with Wandoo, Mission Australia and ex-residents indicated that through these programs, there have been a number of reunifications of families, including cases of residents achieving custody of their children upon release and reuniting of siblings.

2.3.5 Self-advocacy

Self-advocacy at Wandoo is present in the core values of the facility, whereby residents are expected to act under the ‘responsible prisoner’ philosophy. This aims at arming residents with the life skills and personal responsibility required to be a functioning member of society post-release.

The Wandoo Model uses an incentivisation approach. The residents are exposed to the consequences of their actions not through punishment but through a points system, whereby good behaviour is rewarded and poor behaviour results in residents being excluded from the privileges afforded other residents. In particular, good behaviour may result in the provision of activities associated with the Section 95 of the Prisons Act 1981, such as access to external programs and activities, including off-site training, work or recreation. Well-behaved residents are afforded trust and responsibilities that encourage residents through positive reinforcement of good behaviours.

The aim of the Wandoo Model is that post-release ‘the only change is the pillow they sleep on’. This requires the residents to make decisions as to their work, appointment setting, the food they will eat and their plan post-release. For example, Wandoo provides kiosks scattered throughout the facility that allow residents to book their own medical, legal and community appointments, remain up-to-date with their own calendar schedule, buy their preferred items and search for courses and programs they would like to enrol in. The residents are also provided with choice and afforded advocacy over their personal experiences within Wandoo and post-release. Whilst in the facility, residents elect the activities in which they engage, including training and personal development programs, recreation activities, personal items for use and bed time. The empowerment of choice encourages residents to become accountable for their personal planning and career paths post-release and prepares them for the decision-making responsibilities required when they have returned to the broader community.
2.3.6 Sense of community

Desistance from reoffending is significantly based on the relationship between the individual and the wider community. For example, attachment with peer or family groups, colleagues and community groups develop a sense of belonging and connection that deters individuals to act in a way that would be detrimental to that group.

The Wandoo Model aims to develop a sense of community prior to release so that residents may learn how to be a functional member of society. Within Wandoo, the residents create the community through peer mentoring and support and the implementation of social norms. Orientation is provided by other residents, where the social norms of the community are dictated and a sense of peer responsibility established. Older or longer serving residents of the facility are encouraged to take on mentoring and counselling roles for other residents, where they can provide advice or support them in the development of their post-release plans or letter writing.

In addition, Wandoo seeks to connect Indigenous residents with their heritage through the provision of traditional ceremonies and cultural events. Indigenous peer support and counsellors, use of local language for the maintenance of ties with the Indigenous community. In particular, Wandoo has a partnership with the Aboriginal Alcohol and Drug Service (AADS), delivering the ‘Who’s ya Mob’ program “focusing on a drug free approach to participants incorporating education, harm reduction, building self-esteem, relationship building, drumbeat and understanding cultural identity”.

A sense of community is also established through the facility staff. Consultation with staff at the Wandoo Facility indicated that a key differentiator of the facility is the sense of fulfilment that the staff experience in their roles, which in turn translates to the experience of residents. This was confirmed through consultation with an ex-resident who noted that interaction with staff at Wandoo was a different experience from than other prison’s experienced by the resident. The ex-resident indicated that staff were strict but friendly, didn’t treat the residents like inmates and were interested in their personal well-being and progress.

Consultation with an ex-resident at Wandoo indicated that the feeling of safety and security at Wandoo was a clear differentiator from other facilities. The ex-resident stated that he felt safer at Wandoo than at other facilities and didn’t witness the same level of violence or self-harm. He attributed this to the visibility of staff and the ‘brotherhood’ brought about through an understanding of other residents experiences and a sense of responsibility for impacting others with whom relationships had been built by mingling of all residents in common areas.

Sources

Australian Institute of Criminology (2016), Supported Housing for Prisoners Returning to the Community: a review of the literature, www.justice.vic.gov.au
Department of Corrective Services, Young Adult Facility Contract (Wandoo Reintegration Facility), Annual Report 2015/16

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