The Straight For Work Program

Promoting Positive Life Change Through Comprehensive Support for Prisoners with Complex Needs

November 2009

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November 2009

Published by Deakin University

ISBN 978 1 74156 131 9

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# Table of Contents

Chapter 1 Introduction 1
  1.1 Background 1
  1.2 Management and Organisation of the *Straight For Work* Program 1
  1.3 Model of Service Delivery 3
  1.4 The Purpose of the Evaluation 8

Chapter 2 Review and Critique of Relevant Literature 11
  2.1 Prisoners in Australia 11
  2.2 Challenges Confronting Prisoners and Ex-Prisoners 12
  2.3 High Need and At-Risk Offenders 18
  2.4 The Value of Post-Release Support 20
  2.5 Mentoring of Adult Offenders 24
  2.6 Recidivism 27
  2.7 Summary of the Literature Review 29

Chapter 3 *Straight For Work* Program Process Evaluation 31
  3.1 Methodology for the Process Evaluation 31
  3.2 Program Logic 32
  3.3 Program Design 34
  3.4 Program Delivery 35
  3.5 *Straight For Work*: WISE Program Delivery Staff Perspective 37
  3.6 *Straight For Work*: Department of Corrective Services Staff Perspective 40
  3.7 *Straight For Work*: Mentor Perspective 42
  3.8 Summary 43

Chapter 4 *Straight For Work* Program Outcomes Evaluation 47
  4.1 The *Straight For Work* Participant Group 47
  4.2 Outcome Data 48
  4.3 Characteristics of Program Participants 49
  4.4 Key Performance Indicators 58
  4.5 Summary of program outcomes evaluation 62
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 5</th>
<th>Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations</th>
<th>65</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>How the Program Logic and Design reflects current research and good practice models</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Program Integrity</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Program Effectiveness</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td></td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures

1. Straight For Work model of transitional support 6
2. Flow through model for the mentoring scheme 7
3. A simple, three-part model of reintegration 81
4. An integrated system of support 84

List of Tables

1. Age distribution of program participants 50
2. Distribution of disability type for program participants 51
3. Levels of participant education 52
4. Participant histories of drug and alcohol abuse 52
5. Frequency and percentage of participant criminal offences 53
6. Frequency and percentage of participants engaged in intervention treatments and programs 55
7. Frequency and percentage of accommodation outcomes for program participants 56
8. Frequency and percentage of employment outcomes for program participants 56
9. Frequency and percentage of active and exited participants 57
10. Proportions relevant to program delivery for prison located participants 59
11. Outcomes related to essential services 60
12. Proportions relevant to mentoring for prison located participants 61
13. Outcomes related to employment 61
14. Program integrity factors and the Straight For Work Program 70
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

The Straight For Work program was a community investment initiative of WISE Employment Limited. From July, 2007 through June, 2009 it operated in collaboration with the NSW Department of Corrective Services (DCS), The Compulsory Drug Treatment Correctional Centre (CDTCC) located in Parklea, NSW, and Dillwynia Women's Correctional Centre located in Windsor, NSW. The Straight For Work program was funded through the Attorney-General's Department, National Community Crime Prevention Programme. The Straight For Work program was located in the WISE Employment office in Penrith, New South Wales. The Straight For Work program was delivered by a group of multi-disciplinary community service collaborators. It was a purpose-designed program to assist adult prisoners with a disability and other co-morbid conditions to successfully re-enter the community, offering intensive support three months prior to prisoner release and continuing nine months post-release. The program was the first of its kind in New South Wales, incorporating a range of key elements including education, training, work experience, employment assistance, and mentoring. Throughcare was provided by way of complementary services and support including mental health, drug and alcohol, housing, and other welfare support to participants with a disability and other conditions of co-morbidity within and beyond incarceration. Using this approach, the program addressed barriers to vocational and/or educational progress, as well as offering individual support at a personal level through a positive and beneficial relationship with a volunteer mentor. The program was based on a belief that without comprehensive support, ex-prisoners face multiple barriers to reintegration and have very high rates of recidivism.

The overarching purpose of the program was to support positive life change. Through engagement in volunteer community mentoring, employment, education, and training, the program aimed to reduce drug related crime, re-offending, drug-taking behaviour, while enhancing socialisation and life skills as well as citizenship. Thus, the program had a dual purpose of supporting positive lifestyle change for individuals and reducing recidivism through provision of this combination of support services.

1.2 Management and Organisation of the Straight For Work Program

The Straight For Work program reported to WISE, the NSW Department of Corrective Services, The Compulsory Drug Treatment Correctional Centre, and Dillwynia Women's Correctional Centre. With respect to the relationship between the Straight For Work program and WISE, the expectation was that WISE provided overall management and the administration necessary to satisfy accountability and reporting requirements, thereby allowing the Straight For Work program to focus on vocational support and training, mentoring, as well as providing access to essential
support services. These are considered the strengths of the *Straight For Work* program.

The *Straight For Work* program was headed by a full-time program manager. The program manager’s role grew and evolved with the program. The program manager role included a variety of tasks: staff management and development; financial management of the program; intensive case management; establishment and maintenance of volunteer mentorship; maintenance of a data and reporting system; and reporting to WISE on program performance. In addition to the program manager, there were two case managers who worked with participants in all aspects of the program. The case managers were also required to deliver specialised training in advanced employability and communication skills, in conjunction with WISE specialist trainers. The *Straight For Work* training complemented and extended an existing basic work skills training program offered by Dillwynia. Of course, there was the day-to-day management of the program that involved delivery of training in three locations (WISE Employment Limited, the CDTCC, and Dillwynia). The consultancy and training dimension to the program also involved regular interactions with a range of other stakeholders. For these reasons, the management role was quite complex.

So, in short, the *Straight For Work* program operated within a case management model, with a strong emphasis on individual service and flexibility in working with participants. In working with prisoners with a disability, it was recognised that progress is often slow and intermittent, that they demonstrate high levels of ongoing support need, as well as showing fairly high rates of regression and attrition, even among those motivated to succeed. Referrals to the program came exclusively through the two Department of Corrective Services partners in the program, Dillwynia and the CDTCC. For each of two consecutive years, the program aimed to support 25 prisoners with a disability, irrespective of age, gender, or culture, each year. The program was designed to support female and male participants who have an identifiable disability or major functional limitation as a result of a diagnosed or undiagnosed medical condition, mental health condition and/or substance abuse problem.

**Dillwynia Women's Correctional Centre**

Dillwynia Women's Correctional Centre is a medium security facility for female offenders located within the John Morony Correctional Complex in New South Wales. It is the first purpose-built facility for women offenders in the state. Dillwynia has the capacity to accommodate 200 women of varying classification categories. Currently there are approximately 180 female inmates.

Dillwynia offers a wide range of programs and services to female offenders that are designed to address their risks and special needs. Numerous work industries operate from Dillwynia that promote work ready skills including horticulture, telemarketing, and food services (e.g., Gloria Jeans). The facility has a special focus on vocational training and basic education programs, as well as the delivery of group programs that address causes of offending. Additional programs are designed to promote pro-social behaviour. The Offender Programs Unit oversees the provision of all program activities. While operating, the *Straight For Work* program was one of several programs operating within and in partnership with Dillwynia.
The Compulsory Drug Treatment Correctional Centre (CDTCC)

The Compulsory Drug Treatment Correctional Centre (CDTCC) is located adjacent to the Parklea Correctional Complex in New South Wales. Currently, the CDTCC accommodates up to 70 males in individual cells who have been sentenced to a Compulsory Drug Treatment Order by the New South Wales Drug Court. There are also individuals who are under community supervision following their release from the CDTCC. The team at the CDTCC is multidisciplinary, comprising program staff appointed by the Department of Corrective Services, nursing and medical staff appointed by Justice Health, and custodial staff. There is a focus on abstinence-based treatment, rehabilitation, education, and reintegration of participants who are repeat offenders due to long-term drug addiction. Offenders who are referred to the CDTCC must meet certain criteria in order to be eligible for the program. Each participant is subject to a Compulsory Drug Treatment Personal Plan which imposes conditions on the participant with respect to drug treatment and rehabilitation for the duration of the Drug Treatment Order. The CDTCC is guided primarily by the Compulsory Drug Treatment Correctional Centre Act (2004), with the Centre being the first of its kind in Australia.

The Compulsory Drug Treatment Program comprises three stages. The first stage is closed detention for at least six months in a secure environment. Programs address areas including work readiness, adult education, skills training, and therapeutic needs. The second stage is semi-open detention for at least six months with access to community-based programs including employment, vocational training, adult education, and therapeutic programs. The third stage is community custody under intensive supervision at accommodation approved by the Drug Court. Participants in community-based programs are expected to consolidate any gains made in Stage Two, as well as promoting access to mainstream community services. Release on parole is determined by the Drug Court. Thus, offenders are gradually reintegrated back into the community, with on-going support provided following completion of the program and beyond the parole period (Birgden, 2008). For the duration of the program, participants of CDTCC were referred to the Straight For Work program on the basis of determined need for the program.

1.3 Model of Service Delivery

Figure 1 presents the Service Delivery Model for the Straight For Work program. As indicated in the model, individuals who were referred to the program from Dillwynia and the CDTCC undertook an initial interview and were screened for suitability to the program. Those individuals accepted on the Straight For Work program were assessed, and a pre- and post-release support plan developed. As appropriate, supported referrals to essential services were provided, with up to 3 months of transitional support for services addressing assistance needs including unemployment support, accommodation, finance, drug and alcohol, and health and medical issues. Participants who engaged in employability training had up to two years on-going support from the Disability Employment Network, with services including individualised assistance to overcome employment barriers, marketing, job placement, and retention. Participants who engaged in prison mentoring were offered
up to 6 months community-based mentoring post-release, with services including mutually negotiated mentoring activities, and vocational social skill development.

As indicated in Figure 1, outcomes derived from participation in the *Straight For Work* program were expected to be wide-ranging, including reduced offending, reduced drug use, increased vocational participation, as well as numerous employment-related, social, and health benefits. As initially conceived, its primary objective was reduced recidivism through life skills and vocational training, employment and mentoring. Due to difficulties getting accurate information on criminal activity, it was not possible to measure re-offending. Nevertheless, reduced re-offending remained an objective of the program (though not measurable).

More specifically, services provided by the *Straight For Work* program at pre-release included: orientation and assessment; supported referrals to essential services; pre-employment training and education; job skills acquisition with simulated interviews with volunteer mentors; access to partner employees via prison-based expos; and linkage to a trained community mentor. Services provided at post-release included: linkage to essential external support services; on-going case management providing individualised assistance to address complex multiple needs; on-going mentoring; training; and employment placement with WISE employer partners or other relevant labour market options.

**Model of Transitional Support**

According to the model, participants were to be engaged 12 weeks prior to release. At this time a thorough assessment was conducted. A structured pre-release plan was prepared and completed as well, focusing on the participant’s short, medium, and long-term goals following release. Areas addressed in the plan may include drug and alcohol issues, accommodation, transport and essential services (e.g., Centrelink), medical and health issues, relationships and family issues, finance, and social activities. This model of transitional support, therefore, encompassed a range of activities during the custodial phase, including assessment, development of pre- and post-release plans, supported referrals, and at least five meetings prior to release. Services offered at the community level included case management to ensure the participant was adhering to the post-release plan, provision of assistance to engage in needed services, and provision of very intensive support in the first 2 weeks following release.

**Mentoring Scheme**

Figure 2 shows the flow through model for the Mentoring Scheme. As indicated in Figure 2, the primary processes with respect to mentorship included:

- Selection and recruitment of mentors;
- Training mentors (35 hours);
- Referrals and assessment of mentors to the program;
- Training mentorees (50 hours);
- Matching mentors to mentorees;
- Forming mentorship pairs and coaching; and
• Provision of on-going mentoring relation and support.

Mentor training (35 hours) covered a wide range of areas including:

• Roles and responsibilities of mentors;
• Common elements of mentoring;
• The mentoring process;
• Appropriate trust and setting boundaries;
• Effective listening skills and giving and receiving feedback;
• Appropriate assertiveness and effective conflict management;
• Organising strategies for mentoring;
• Types of social economic disadvantage; and
• Mental health, First Aid 1 & 2, and Security Awareness training.

Mentoree training involved completion of a 50 hour unit on Advanced Employability and Life Skills. Module components included:

• The labour market and you – “Keeping up with the Market” (7.5 hours);
• Marketing yourself to employers, self-esteem, and goals (7.5 hours);
• Effective communication in life and the workplace (10 hours);
• Job retention strategies and coping with change (8 hours);
• Life skills, goals, and motivation (7 hours);
• Self-esteem/coping with change (5 hours); and
• Job seeking and maintaining employment (5 hours).

After the mentor and mentoree completed the requisite training, pairs were matched based on identifiers including values, beliefs, profession, personal interests, location, age, sex, and personality types. The first three meetings were informal and were facilitated by the case manager. Additional facilitated mentoring meetings were held during which the mentorship agreement was signed. One-on-one meetings were only held when everyone involved was comfortable with the arrangement. In the post-release phase, there were at least three facilitated mentorship meetings, with the expectation that on-going community-based mentoring would be provided for at least 6 months.
**Straight For Work Service Delivery Model**

- **Referral To Program**
  - Client Orientation Information session
  - Transitional Vocational Mentoring

- **Comprehensive Emotional Practical Needs Assessment**
  - Pre & Post Release Support Plan

- **Engage**
  - Mentoring
  - Engage Employment Training

- **Supported Referrals to Essential Services**
  - Engage in prison

- **Services**
  - Drug and Alcohol issues
  - Accommodation
  - Transport
  - Essential Services - i.e., Centrelink
  - Medical and Health
  - Relationships and family
  - Finances
  - Social activities

- **Up to 3 months Transitional Support**
  - Engage Employment Training
  - Released

- **Up to 2 years Ongoing Disability Employment Network**

- **Individualised assistance to overcome employment barriers**
  - Structured Employment Preparation Activities
  - Linkage to extensive networks of complementary programs & services
  - Marketing, Job Placement and Retention
  - Reviews and Monitoring of participant activities

- **Up to 6 months Community Based Mentoring**
  - Mentoring activities mutually negotiated between Mentor/Mentee
  - Determined by need
  - Focus on vocational/social skills development
  - Minimum requirement of 4 hrs contact per month

- **Independent Research & Evaluation**
  - Throughcare, continuity of care

- **CUSTODY**
  - WISE Program 3 Months Before release

- **Aftercare, post-release**
  - Resettlement, Reintegration

- **COMMUNITY**
  - Independent & productive community membership

- **Outcomes**
  - Reduced offending
  - Reduced drug use
  - Increased vocational participation
  - Increased self esteem and confidence
  - Increased socialisation
  - Improved life skills
  - Improved health
  - Improved family relationships
  - Living wage
  - Citizenship - a sense of belonging
  - Increase employment opportunities
  - Improved job search networks
  - Achieved employment goals
  - Improved community perceptions towards the issue of diversity
  - Reinforced values of a society inclusive of all people

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Client (Mentee) completes Orientation session expresses interest in mentoring.

Mentoring suitability Assessment conducted.

Engagement in Effective Workplace Communication Prequisite.

Client engaged in mentoring scheme.

Mentor recruited, screened and authorities for DBS checks provided.

DBS Checks complete.

Mentor Training ongoing 7 X 4 hours sessions Prequisite.

Mentor engaged in mentoring scheme.

Primary Elements:
- Recruiting mentors
- Selecting mentors
- Training mentors
- Matching mentors & mentees
- Facilitating mentorship pairs & coaching
- On-going Mentoring Support

Pre Release
- Facilitated initial mentoring meetings at least x 2

Post Release
- Facilitated mentorship meetings at least 3 ongoing Community Based mentoring 6 months

The role of WISE Mentorship Facilitator:
- Establish mentorship, develop mentorship agreement
- Manage interactions so that mentorship stays focused and makes progress
- Clarification of the broad mentorship goals
- Clarification of roles and common ways of working during mentorship
- Agree rules for a way of working, which everyone can support
- Planning the mentorship life cycle
- Documentation and evaluation sessions
- Observing & determine what problems they are having
- Debriefing mentor and mentee, clarify instructions, review strategies
- Assisting during the follow-up of each meeting
- Providing encouragement

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Figure 2. Flow through model for the mentoring scheme.
1.4 The Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation has been to investigate the Straight For Work program in terms of:

- the soundness of the program's logic and design;
- the extent to which the program's integrity was preserved in delivery; and
- the program's effectiveness in achieving performance targets.

These are essential elements of all quality program evaluation. These elements fit together in a very important way. Without sound logic and design, a program is not likely to succeed due to a mismatch between what is an ideal (concept and design) and the reality that the program is intended to address. Without knowledge of the extent to which program delivery has adhered to program principles and design, it is impossible to know whether shortfalls in performance have resulted from 'faulty' logic and/or design or from 'faulty' follow-through in the delivery processes. Without also evaluating performance in terms of outputs and outcomes in relation to targets, it is not possible to make judgements about a program's success. These three elements are, therefore, intrinsically related to each other.

In order to address these three aspects of the evaluation, we conducted a process evaluation and an outcomes evaluation. The process evaluation examined the Straight For Work program logic and design, as well as program integrity, to ensure that these elements were consistent with the aims of providing complementary services and support to prisoners with a disability and other conditions of co-morbidity. The review of program logic and design was undertaken in reference to relevant international and national literature and review of program documents. Evaluation of the integrity of program delivery included review of program documents and interviews with key stakeholders including Department of Corrective Services staff, Straight For Work program delivery staff, and community mentors.

The outcomes evaluation examined program effectiveness in terms of employment and vocational training outcomes achieved and mentoring program outcomes. More specifically, the outcomes evaluation examined outputs in relation to targets over the two years of the program in areas including program commencement, completion of training, case management (pre- and post-release plans), links to essential services, mentor recruitment and training, achievement of short and longer-term mentorships, achievement of durable employment, and program exits. Vocational training outcomes were to be analysed but were not included in the data file. It is understood that vocational training in the form of 50 hours of life skills training was undertaken by all commencements. In addition, it was originally intended to include analysis of recidivism outcomes achieved over the two years of the Straight For Work program by assessing recidivism rates for ex-prisoner participants compared with recidivism rates for all ex-prisoners. This proved impossible, as the Straight For Work program data files do not include recidivism data, it was not possible to get access to de-identified records from the Department, and ethics approval was not given to access Department records.

The findings of the evaluation of the Straight For Work program are intended to provide WISE, the New South Wales Department of Corrective Services, and other
stakeholders with information to assist ongoing development of best practice vocational support programs for prisoners. Information gained from the evaluation was expected to assist with improvement in design and implementation of comprehensive support programs for adult prisoners who have a disability and other co-morbid conditions.

The evaluation as a whole has:

- analysed relevant national and international research literature including attributes of relevant, effective programs;
- considered the appropriateness of program logic and principles, approach, target groups, and intended delivery processes;
- examined communication, reporting and mutual support arrangements between the Straight For Work program and partner providers;
- assessed whether the Straight For Work program met performance targets and objectives;
- identified and assessed any unintended project consequences and outcomes; and
- considered means by which program improvement may be achieved and how, in general, vocational support programs for prisoners should be designed and delivered.

In short, the evaluation comprised evaluation of both program processes and program outcomes for the purpose of reviewing performance over the two years of the Straight For Work program, identifying program strengths, examining operating conditions that impacted on the program, and identifying areas for program improvement. Recommendations for future vocational support programs for prisoners have been proposed, including recommendations on program logic, design and delivery.

This report commences with a review and critique of international and Australian literature relevant to the Straight For Work program and its intended participants. Specific focus has been given to issues relevant to the various elements of our program evaluation. Next, we provide an analysis of the Straight For Work program logic, design and delivery from the perspective of program participants, stakeholders, and mentors (the process Evaluation). This chapter provides an analysis of program integrity and a context for understanding and discussing program outcomes. Following this, there is a chapter that provides an analysis of program effectiveness (the program outcomes evaluation) in which we address employment outcomes, training outcomes, and mentoring outcomes respectively. The report concludes with a chapter that includes a summary of findings, discussion of implications, conclusions and recommendations for future development of vocational support programs for prisoners.
Chapter 2: Review and Critique of Relevant literature

This review of literature is relevant to each of the components of this program evaluation: a process evaluation that includes analysis of program logic, design, and integrity in delivery; and an outcomes evaluation that includes employment and training outcomes evaluation as well as mentoring outcomes evaluation. The program model asserts that employment assistance and training forms a basis for successful reintegration of ex-prisoners, with several broader issues and conditions contributing to that success. In this regard, the literature review is quite broad in nature.

There are six sections in this review. The first section provides an overview of the prison population in Australia and re-offending rates for Australian prisoners. The second section covers the broad range of conditions that contribute to the typically comprehensive disadvantage faced by offenders trying to make a lifestyle change. The third section covers issues specific to high need and at-risk offenders namely women prisoners, prisoners with an intellectual disability, and indigenous prisoners. The fourth section covers the value of post-release support by reviewing programs and types of assistance for adult offenders. The fifth section focuses on the value of mentoring and the effectiveness of mentoring programs for adult offenders. The sixth section focuses on issues related to recidivism among adult offenders. For the purposes of clarity, we consider prisoners on parole as "ex-prisoners". The term "offender" is used variously in the literature to describe a person who has been convicted and incarcerated or those serving non-custodial sentences including intensive corrections orders, community-based orders, and combined custody and treatment orders. An attempt has been made to clarify this issue in the review.

2.1 Prisoners in Australia

As at June 2008, there were 119 custodial facilities throughout Australia, including 87 government-operated prisons, seven privately-operated prisons, 8 periodic detention centres, fourteen 24-hour court cell complexes, and three government-operated community custodial facilities (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision [SCRGSP], 2009). Like other Western countries, Australia has experienced significant increases in the prison population over the last decade. Between June 1998 and June 2008, there was a 39 percent increase in the total prison population in Australia from 19,906 to 27,815 prisoners (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2008). The majority of these prisoners are male (93%). Although males are much more likely to be in prison, the rate of increase in the female prisoner population from 1998 to 2008 was significantly higher, at 72 percent, than for the male prisoner population, at 37 percent.
There was a steady increase (20%) in the national imprisonment rate as well, from 141 to 169 prisoners per 100,000 adult population between 1998 and 2008, respectively (ABS, 2008). In terms of gender, the national imprisonment rate was 306.9 per 100,000 adult males and 22.6 per 100,000 adult females in 2007-08 (SCRGSP, 2009). Indigenous prisoners represented 24 percent of all prisoners at June 2008. With the exception of Tasmania, Western Australia, and Queensland, all states and territories recorded an increase in the imprisonment rate since 2007. At June 2008, the median age of the total prisoner population was 33 years, with over 73 percent of all prisoners located in New South Wales (10,510), Queensland (5,544), and Victoria (4,223) (ABS, 2008). At June 2008, the median expected time to serve was 1.8 years (ABS, 2008).

Re-offending by Australian prisoners

It is difficult to estimate the precise number of prisoners who are released annually from the Australian prison system; however some investigators have placed the estimate at over 43,000 (Baldry, McDonnell, Maplestone, & Peeters, 2003). While it is difficult to gauge how successfully these individuals have reintegrated into mainstream society, the rate of re-offence provides an indirect measure of the effectiveness of imprisonment.

At June 2008, over half (55%) of all prisoners had been incarcerated in an adult prison prior to the current sentence (ABS, 2008). Over one third (38.2%) of prisoners released from Australian prisons in 2005/06 returned to prison within two years, and 44 percent returned to corrective services (SCRGSP, 2009). Of those offenders discharged from community corrections orders during 2005-2006, 17.5 percent had received a new correctional sanction within two years, and 27.9 percent of offenders returned to corrective services (i.e., prison or community corrections order) within the same time period (SCRGSP, 2009). It is unknown how many of these returning prisoners had a disability. This data suggest that imprisonment is not a sufficient deterrent to prevent a large proportion of Australian prisoners from re-offending following prison release. It may also indicate that comprehensive and long-term support is needed to assist prisoners to meet the challenge of reintegration.

2.2 Challenges Confronting Prisoners and Ex-Prisoners

Wide-ranging conditions of disadvantage have been reported for prisoners and ex-prisoners including barriers to employment, problems obtaining satisfactory housing, poverty and debt, deprived or deficient social networks, difficulties with child care, and problems accessing public benefits (Dutreix, 2000; Employment Support Unit, 2000; Hirsch et al., 2002; Ogilvie, 2001; Webster, Hedderman, Turnbull & May, 2001). They may also experience numerous health conditions that add to this multiple disadvantage and contribute to marginality. These conditions include
substance abuse problems and chronic physical and mental health conditions. Such barriers and conditions, alone and in combination, can “tear families apart, create unemployment and homelessness, and guarantee failure, thereby harming parents and children, families and communities” (Hirsch et al., 2002, p.1).

Physical and mental health

When people enter the prison system, diagnoses, treatment and codification of illness may be undertaken. Many of the medical conditions identified within the prison system are pre-existing illnesses that require on-going treatment. In terms of physical ill-health, extant research has shown particularly high prevalence rates for many infectious diseases (e.g., Hepatitis C virus, HIV, Hepatitis B virus, and Tuberculosis) among prisoners in comparison to the general population (National Commission on Correctional Health Care [NCCHC], 2002) due to risk factors that are common among prisoners prior to prison entry. These risk factors include injection drug use and unsafe sex practices (Baillargeon et al., 2004). In fact, infection rates for HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Hepatitis C among the prison population have been estimated as five to ten times higher than the general population of the United States (Hammett, 2000, cited in Travis, Solomon, & Waul, 2001).

Recent data from the National Institute of Justice on the health status of prisoners approaching release in the United States also indicates a higher prevalence of mental health disorders, and substance abuse problems among prisoners compared with the general population. Although some of these conditions may have been precipitated or exacerbated by close-living prison conditions, it is likely that many prisoners with a disability would also experience these medical disorders. Moreover, the few studies that have investigated the many chronic illnesses affecting prisoners have found asthma to be more prevalent among prisoners than the general community (e.g., NCCHC, 2002). Although prevalence rates of diabetes and hypertension are generally not higher among prisoners compared to community residents, given the relatively young age of prisoners and that these conditions typically afflict older individuals, prevalence of these conditions among the prisoner population is still considered to be high.

Nationally, prevalence rates for Hepatitis (A, B, and C), asthma, and sexually transmitted diseases, among other medical conditions, are also considerably higher among prisoners than for the general Australian population. A recent study revealed that more than half of a sample of 630 Victorian prisoners (57%) was infected with Hepatitis C, compared to only 1 percent of the Australian general population (Hellard, Crofts, & Hocking, 2002). The infection rate of HIV is also higher among prisoner entrants than the general population, with 0.3 percent of people entering Australian prison reported to be infected with HIV, compared to 0.06 percent (60 per 100,000) of the Australian general population (National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research, 2008). Prisoners with a disability may also be unduly affected by chronic and infectious diseases such as those described above.

In terms of mental health, it has been estimated that between 8 and 16 percent of the prison population have, at a minimum, one serious mental health condition and require treatment (Solomon, Waul, Van Ness, & Travis, 2004). In fact, the incidence of mental illness among incarcerated individuals (incorporating schizophrenia/psychosis, major depression, bipolar disorder, and post-traumatic
stress disorder) is estimated to be at least twice that of the general population of the United States (Ditton, 1999; Fazel & Danesh, 2002), Britain, and Australia (Fazel & Danesh, 2002). Moreover, about 16 percent of prisoners returning to the community have a serious mental illness (Ditton, 1999; Human Rights Watch, 2003). It is apparent, therefore, that a significant portion of offenders convicted of serious crimes have had contact with community mental health services (Wallace et al., 1998). A large number of prisoners with mental illness also have a history of alcohol and/or drug abuse (Ditton 1999; Travis et al., 2001), compounding the difficulties that may be experienced upon release. Moreover, a large proportion of female prisoners have a history of physical or sexual abuse (Ditton, 1999) which may contribute to their mental health problems.

Among Australian prisoners, there is evidence for higher levels of major mental health conditions including depression, than the Australian general population (Butler, Allnut, Cain, Owens, & Muller, 2005; Deloitte Consulting, 2003). For example, among the NSW inmate population, the 12-month prevalence of any psychiatric disorder was considerably higher (74% vs. 22%) than for the general community, and 38 percent of sentenced prisoners had suffered a mental disorder contributing to their difficulties. A high proportion of the prisoner sample also had a 12-month diagnosis of substance use disorder (Butler & Allnut, 2003). In addition, female prisoners had higher levels of psychiatric morbidity than male prisoners (Butler et al., 2005). Psychiatric disorders also commonly co-occur with numerous disability types (e.g., Hayes, 2007). While Australian prisoners are released with the medication that they need in the short-term or a pharmaceutical referral to meet their short-term health needs, longer-term maintenance of physical and mental health conditions may be problematic.

Prisoners with a mental illness face unique challenges upon release that may impact on successful community reintegration. As identified earlier, estimates of the rate of mental illness among prisoners is high both nationally (e.g., in New South Wales see New South Wales [NSW] Public Health Division, 2002) and internationally (Ditton, 1999). These estimates are likely to underestimate the number of affected individuals given that many people with mental illness do not self-identify and/or seek treatment. In fact, mentally ill offenders have been sentenced by magistrates to ensure access to some specialist services (New South Wales Legislative Council [NSW LC] Standing Committee on Law and Justice, 2000). Some of the challenges that they face include homelessness, limited social contact, low educational attainment, lack of work history due to prior periods of unemployment, dependency on alcohol and/or drugs, and a general unwillingness to seek treatment (see White, Chant, & Whiteford, 2006).

**Education and finance**

In general, prisoners show typically low levels of educational attainment (ABS, 2002), literacy (Fletcher, 2001; Haigler, Harlow, O’Connor, & Campbell, 1994), and numeracy (Buck, 2000) which may translate into low skill development. Low education levels increase the probability of offenders being unemployed and using further criminal activity to derive income. Limited finance also creates a condition of disadvantage that may contribute to their marginality within the community. Limited finances impact directly on the individual’s ability to obtain suitable housing, reunify
with his or her family, utilise transportation, and access physical and/or mental health treatment, including that for substance use. Most unemployed ex-prisoners rely heavily on income from family members and friends (La Vigne, Visher, & Castro, 2004). A substantial proportion of ex-prisoners have debt upon release which exceeds their monthly income (Visher, La Vigne, & Travis, 2004). There appears to be a substantive link between substance use and debt, with those who owe money at least twice as likely to use drugs or to be intoxicated by alcohol than those without debt (La Vigne et al., 2004).

**Drug and alcohol use**

The most prominent ill-health condition among prisoners is substance use (Solomon et al., 2004). Consideration of the 12-month to lifetime prevalence rates show that substance use disorders are more common among prisoners than the general community (Butler et al., 2005; Tye & Mullen, 2006). In the United States approximately 80 percent of prisoners have been identified as having some type of drug or alcohol problem (Mumola, 1999), with over 50 percent reporting that they were affected when they committed the offence associated with their imprisonment (Mumola, 1999). Among prisoners awaiting release within the next year, 74 percent have been reported to have a history of drug use and/or alcohol abuse (Mumola, 1999).

High drug and alcohol dependency levels have also been reported among Australian prisoners and police detainees (Adams, Sandy, Smith, & Triglone, 2008; Makkai & Payne, 2003). In an Australian survey of drug use among 3,911 police detainees, 43 percent were identified as dependent on illicit drugs and 32 percent were dependent on alcohol. A higher proportion of female detainees were dependent on illicit drugs than male detainees. One third of the sample attributed their offending at least, in part, to drug use, confirming a link between lifetime offending and drug use (Adams et al., 2008).

In addition, a Victorian study recently identified a large proportion (41%, n = 451) of prisoners with alcohol abuse or dependence using the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT). That prevalence rate of high risk drinking, characterised as more than 2 alcoholic drinks per day (prior to prison entry), was higher than the rate among the general Australian population in which less than 10 percent are reported to fall in this category (Deloitte Consulting, 2003). Arguably, similar levels of alcohol and substance abuse may be found among prisoners with a disability and post-release services for these addictive conditions would serve as effective recidivism measures.

**Multiple disadvantage**

Multiple diognoses are not uncommon among prisoners (Hammett, Roberts, & Kennedy, 2001). It is apparent that prisoners, as a group, have a more complex clinical picture than the general population as they show a higher co-morbidity of disorders (Abram, 1990; Edens, Peters, & Hills, 1997; Lurigio et al., 2003; Swartz & Lurigio, 1999). In fact, between 3 and 11 percent of the prisoners in the United States have a co-occurring substance abuse disorder and mental health condition (Edens, et al., 1997). Co-morbid psychiatric disorders have also been noted among adult prisoners (e.g., Fazel & Danesh, 2002; Shinkfield, Graffam, & Meneilly, 2009).
Multiple diagnoses of physical and mental ill-health, in addition to substance use problems, provide a considerable challenge in reintegration; particularly so among prisoners who have a disability.

Factors related to drug and alcohol overuse can also impact on the ability of offenders to reintegrate into the community. In the ten year period between 1990 and 2000, more than 80 percent of prisoners reported that their imprisonment related to a drug problem (Victorian Department of Justice, 2001). That offending behaviour is often linked to wider social problems such as drug and alcohol abuse means that appropriate interventions need to be available to offenders to deal with the underlying cause of the behaviour and to keep them out of prison (Employment Support Unit, 2000). Drug rehabilitation strategies may include methadone programs, drug education programs (Victorian Department of Justice, 2001), as well as personal counselling and drug awareness programs (Employment Support Unit, 2000). Post-release programs that address employment, accommodation, substance abuse problems, and domestic violence should be provided as well (Ogilvie, 2001). Comprehensive post-release intervention and support may contribute to reduced recidivism.

Social barriers

Ex-prisoners may experience a range of social barriers including discrimination, loss of social standing in the community, fear and hostility among the general community, and a tendency to be rejected for housing, employment, and further education (Helfgott, 1997). There is a complex inter-relation between factors that make the transition from incarceration or criminal and drug culture to the general community extremely difficult. The majority of prisoners are parents (Mumola, 2000) and most lose custody of their children when incarcerated. Approximately 37 percent of participants in the Straight For Work program were females aged between 22 and 45 years old age. As incarceration jeopardises parental custody, keeping offenders out of prison also will have a social benefit for family stability.

Ex-prisoners typically have a limited social network which consists, in many cases, of friends who have been in prison or who have participated in criminal activity (La Vigne, et al., 2004). Despite the fact that many ex-prisoners live with family members upon release (e.g., La Vigne, et al., 2004; Nelson, Deess, & Allen, 1999), social isolation has been described as a 'core experience' of many as a result of homelessness or unstable, unsuitable housing (Baldry et al., 2003). Moreover, successful transition to the community has been reported as dependent on the ability of ex-prisoners to cope with being alienated from former friends, family members, and the broader community, and to deal with profound social isolation and boredom (Graffam, Shinkfield, Lavelle, & McPherson, 2002, 2004). Demonstrably, support programs which assist ex-prisoners maintain family relationships, retain or gain employment, and address health problems are important as they will obviate the risk of social disconnection evidenced among some ex-prisoners.

Accommodation

Accommodation is critical to successful reintegration and development of a more positive lifestyle. Problems finding and sustaining stable, liveable, and affordable accommodation can impact on various psychological and health-related conditions,
as well as one’s social network and employment. Crisis accommodation is a common short-term housing solution for ex-prisoners, but may provide a ‘breeding ground’ for substance abuse and alcohol abuse, as well as restricting social networks to other individuals with similar backgrounds (Rowe, 2002). It is apparent that drug rehabilitation may be largely ineffective if problems related to the need for secure and affordable accommodation are not addressed (Webster et al., 2001). Clearly, supports need to be in place to facilitate stable, safe, and secure accommodation for prisoners making the transition to the community.

Unstable housing may negatively impact on an ex-prisoner’s ability to maintain employment and resume family relationships (Hirsch et al., 2002). Lack of income can also make it extraordinarily difficult for offenders to access reasonable housing (Ogilvie, 2001). Having debt provides a significant barrier to obtaining stable housing by severely restricting housing options, as well as potentially limiting access to needed services, such as telephone and electricity connections, when debts were already owed for these utilities (Stringer, 2002).

**Employment**

Ex-prisoners also experience disadvantage in employment that may contribute to their marginality within the community. In Victoria, somewhere in the range of 60–70 percent of people who re-offend are unemployed at the time of the offence (Victorian Department of Justice, 2001). Barriers to employment are wide-ranging and include: behavioural problems; lack of basic skills and/or poor qualifications; low self-esteem, confidence, and motivation; absent or poor work-experience history; lack of job contacts due to segregated social networks; financial difficulties impacting on interview attendance, purchase of clothing or equipment, and problems making the transition from benefits to employment (e.g., Webster et al., 2001). Attitudes toward the employability of ex-prisoners are also complex and somewhat dependent on the severity and chronicity of criminal background (Graffam, Shinkfield, & Hardcastle, 2008).

Other conditions that contribute to disadvantage in employment include lack of equal opportunity policy and recruitment procedures among employers and difficulty for ex-prisoners or offenders in meeting key skill requirements (Employment Support Unit, 2000). Higher unemployment and lower pay (as much as 30%) is associated with this group (Waldofgel, 1994), adding to the view that they experience persistent difficulties in re-establishing themselves within the mainstream community.

Intervention programs that can support ex-prisoners to either obtain or maintain employment have the advantages of assisting these individuals to stay out of prison and reducing the likelihood of experiencing the accentuated social disadvantages typical to this group. Thus, while having a criminal record is a major impediment to obtaining and retaining a job, the provision of appropriate support and incentives may ameliorate the impact of criminal history (Albright & Denq, 1996). This finding is important in the context of employment assistance and mentoring support for prisoners with a disability.

Several studies have identified legal barriers including laws that prohibit entry into particular job positions, and the employer’s right to access an offender’s criminal record (Mukamal, 2001). Employment prohibitions affecting public sector jobs such as teaching, nursing, police, defence forces, and public service operate within
Australia. These prohibitions vary between jurisdictions and various State and Territory laws exist to guide and protect against discrimination on the basis of criminal record (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission [HREOC], 2005).

Additional problems may relate to difficulty meeting requirements for release including finding employment, random drug screenings, day reporting, and regular parole or probation-officer meetings (Buck, 2000). These manifold social barriers to reintegration may be obviated if effective early intervention support strategies are in place to assist offenders to remain outside the prison system. Arguably such programs which assist ex-prisoners to retain or regain connection to their natural supports including family and the economic system will save the expense of incarceration and the long-term costs of welfare dependency.

2.3 High Need and At-Risk Offenders

Women prisoners

Although women constitute only seven percent of imprisoned offenders, there is evidence that the proportion of female prisoners is increasing both nationally and internationally (ABS, 2008; Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2007; Cameron, 2001). There are challenges that are specific to women prisoners, as well as those related to short-term prisoners, given that women tend to serve shorter sentences than men (Davies & Cook, 1998). Although many prisoners face employment-related barriers upon leaving prison, women appear to be particularly challenged in this regard. Women prisoners tend to have limited experience in the workforce, low education, and are more likely to be responsible for dependent children than their counterparts in the general population (Hamlyn & Lewis, 2000). Upon release, childcare responsibilities may impact on access to suitable housing, as well as restricting employment considerations to those jobs that include access to childcare. Family reunification is often difficult for women to achieve post-release, particularly in lieu of the requirement for mothers to show evidence of their rehabilitation. For example, women are generally unable to regain custody of their children until they have suitable accommodation, which is often dependent on employment and their ability to stay drug- and alcohol-free (Richie, 2001). Compared to men, women ex-prisoners are more likely to need post-release assistance in health care, education, locating accommodation for themselves and their children, and employment preparation and counselling (HREOC, 2004).

In addition, women prisoners have been conceived of as dependent (National Community Crime Prevention, 2005). This dependency may be associated with drugs and/or alcohol, welfare, and other people, as examples. Evidence suggests that it is important to address issues related to dependency in order to reduce re-offending (Morris & Wilkinson, 2000). A large proportion of female prisoners (up to 50%) have a history of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse (Australian Law Reform Commission, 2005) which may contribute to mental health problems. In fact, there is a higher incidence of mental health problems, psychiatric admissions, or counselling among women prisoners than male prisoners (Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland, 2006). The observation that many incarcerated women return to abusive relationships or high-risk settings (Richie, 2001) may indicate dependent
relationships, and adds to the complex and multiple barriers that female ex-prisoners face upon release. Rehabilitation programs developed for adult male ex-prisoners may be inappropriate for women ex-prisoners due to gender differences relating to history of abuse, dependencies, experience of anger and anger management, and psychopathology (see Sorbello, Eccleston, Ward, & Jones, 2002).

Programs that take account of the special needs of women prisoners, such as the Straight For Work program, are an important contribution to rehabilitative efforts. Ideal features of programs for women ex-prisoners include case management, strengthening community capacity, personal empowerment, mentoring, and predictable, structured, and well-resourced activities that provide an opportunity for collective community action (see Australian Institute of Criminology [AIC], 2005; see also Richie, 2001).

**Prisoners with an intellectual disability**

In Australia and other western countries, numerous studies have reported an overrepresentation of people with an intellectual disability in prisons or other sections of the criminal justice system compared to the prevalence of intellectual disability in the general population (e.g., Cockram, 2005a, 2005b; Hayes & McIlwain, 1988; Hayes, Shackell, Mottram, & Lancaster, 2007). In New South Wales, it has been estimated that the prevalence of intellectual disability in prison populations (IQ score less than 70) is 20 percent (Hayes, 2000, cited in Hayes et al., 2007). Prisoners with an intellectual disability face numerous difficulties including problems interacting with justice officials, such as the police. In some instances, their complex and special needs may also be unmet because of poor identification of the presence of intellectual disability. In fact, numerous studies have demonstrated the difficulty of identifying intellectual disability in offenders or accused individuals, even among health professionals (Hayes, 1993, 1996; New South Wales Law Reform Commission, 1996).

Numerous investigators have examined the characteristics of Australian prisoners with an intellectually disability. Identified characteristics include high rates of recidivism, a history of homelessness, high rates of contact with psychiatric services, a likelihood of co-existing substance abuse problems, social networks that are unable to help with dealing with their offending, a likelihood of poor education, and high rates of unemployment, (e.g., Cockram, 2005a, 2005b; Simpson, Martin, & Green, 2001). Particularly important is the high recidivism rate, estimated at between 40 percent and 70 percent (Klimecki, Jenkinson, & Wilson, 1994; Lindsay & Holand, 2000). Given the complex and special needs of this subgroup, it is often the case that services have inadequate specialist staff and unmet treatment needs (see Simpson, et al., 2001).

Like their non-disabled counterparts, women prisoners who have an intellectual disability demonstrate high rates of mental illness; in fact, higher than male prisoners with an intellectual disability (Hayes, 2007). As well, a high proportion of women prisoners with an intellectual disability report a history of sexual abuse (about 60%) and physical abuse (about 40%) (Alexander, Piachaud, & Gangadharan, 2005; Lindsay et al., 2004). Aggression is also a common characteristic of this subgroup which may contribute to contact with the criminal justice system and involvement with health professionals (Allen, Lindsay, MacLeod, & Smith, 2001), as well as to
difficulties in reintegration. Thus, women prisoners with and without an intellectual disability are important and often neglected subgroups who have specific areas of difficulty that need to be addressed in support programs.

Indigenous prisoners

There is a disproportionate number of indigenous Australians in the Australian correctional system. Generally speaking, this group tends to exhibit a greater share of the factors that contribute to estimates of risk of re-offending, such as history of criminal behaviour, younger age, unemployment, and alcohol abuse (e.g., Jones, Masters, Griffiths, & Moulday, 2002). Indigenous Australians may also experience loss of positive identity and connection to culture (Jones et al., 2002) that may contribute to challenges in reintegration. Indigenous women in the correctional system may be particularly challenged (Baldry et al., 2003).

2.4 The Value of Post-release Support

The provision of treatment and support after custody and extending into the community is called throughcare. The process of providing continuity of care enables in-prison rehabilitative gains to be maintained, and assists the individual to deal with the many challenges associated with integrating into the general community. In this way, it is expected that the risk of re-offending by ex-prisoners is reduced (Cullen & Gendreau, 2000). Additional advantages of post-release services relate to improving the quality of life of ex-offenders, and on a utilitarian level, potentially improving public safety. Depending on its focus, post-release support is called aftercare, transitional care, re-entry, reintegration or resettlement. Prisoner profiles are increasingly complex, with individuals demonstrating wide-ranging needs relating to unresolved drug and alcohol issues, minimal education, no or poor employment history, chronic physical health problems, mental illness, poor social skills, inadequate family relationships, and backgrounds of social disadvantage (SCRCCP, 2009). It is in this context that transitional care is particularly relevant. Programs like Straight For Work are important in this regard, providing complementary services and support to prisoners with a disability within and beyond incarceration.

The personal and social characteristics of prisoners with a disability and the comprehensiveness of their support needs strongly suggest the need for specialist support services to support this group. Relevant services do exist, but are not common. Most ex-prisoners must independently access generic support services of various kinds once released from prison. A review of employment and vocational training programs and drug and alcohol programs follows.

Employment and vocational training programs

Internationally, there are numerous employment assistance and vocational training programs, but they are not widespread and are often narrow in focus (employment-specific). There are numerous employment preparation and vocational training programs that operate within prisons. While these programs are designed to improve the employment prospects of prisoners upon release, the outcomes are typically modest even when specialist providers are involved. There are also wide-ranging community-based job-training programs, with some including a throughcare
component. Examples of several effective employment preparation and vocational training programs are provided below, after which elements of preferred practice are identified.

In the United States, employment outcomes for offender participants (n=521) who participated in a job-training program over a two-year period (1989-1990) were compared to that of a random sample of non-offender program participants (n=734) (Finn & Willoughby, 1996). Groups were matched in terms of employment barriers or economic disadvantage. Results indicated that prior employment status and not criminal background was influential on employment outcomes, with those participants who were unemployed 15 months prior to participation being less likely to be employed at program end. Positive effects associated with employer-based training were found, with participants involved in such training being more likely to be employed at both the program end and at a 14-week follow-up than those who were not involved in the training. These findings suggest that the skill level and work experience of an offender play a greater role in employment outcomes than offender status.

Finn (1998) reported on a program based in New York City designed to assist ex-prisoners to prepare for, find, and remain in jobs. Over a five year period from 1992 to 1996, an average of 766 participants were placed in full-time jobs each year (within two to three months of their participation) which equated to an average yearly placement rate of approximately 70 percent. The majority of these jobs entailed above minimum wage with additional fringe benefits. As well, job retention rates were quite high; approximately 75 percent of participants placed in employment remained in the same job after one month, 60 percent remained employed after three months, and 38 percent were still employed after six months.

A more recent study by Samo, Hearnden, Hedderman, Hough, Nee and Herrington (2000) reported on a comprehensive support program in England providing assistance in the areas of employment, training, housing, and leisure to young offenders on probation. Over a three year period, 1,957 referrals were made to the program, with employment being the main reason for referral. Over the three years, 452 offenders were employed. Offender feedback on the project was generally positive, with improved prospects for employability often attributed to the project. The recidivism rate for offenders who commenced in the program in the first year was 32 percent, although this figure increased to 45 percent when the age range was restricted to those offenders aged 16–25 years who were targeted for the project. Providing a multi-faceted approach to reintegration was viewed as an ideal approach.

Zhang, Roberts, and Callanan (2006) evaluated the Preventing Parolee Crime program (PPCP) in the United States which provides employment services, literacy education, housing support, and substance abuse treatment for parolees. Participants of the program has a recidivism rate of 44.8% compared to 52.8% for non-program parolees; however the rate of recidivism was substantially lower (32.7%) for those participants that met at least one treatment goal of the program(s). Program effects associated with meeting the treatment goals of the two employment training programs incorporated in PPCP also revealed generally low rates of recidivism (at 28.5% and 33.1%) for program participants, supporting the benefits of community-based employment interventions.
Job Futures (2004) reported outcomes for the *Victorian Correctional Services Employment Pilot Program* indicating a 14.3 percent employment placement rate for prisoner participants, with 48.5 percent of those placed into employment sustaining 13 weeks of employment. Community corrections clients achieved a 46.3 percent placement rate, with 50.9 percent of those placed into employment sustaining 13 weeks of employment. Reported recidivism rates were 4.7 percent for those registered in the program and 3.8 percent for those placed in employment. These figures are generally consistent with those reported in Queensland and well below general recidivism rates.

A subsequent study by Graffam, Shinkfield, Mihailides, and Lavelle (2005) found that the program had performed even better than that in terms of employment outcomes and almost that well in terms of recidivism over a two-year period. The employment placement program achieved relatively high placement rates, with 34 percent of registered participants placed into employment in the first two years of the program. Sixteen percent of the sample maintained their job for a period of 13 continuous weeks (Graffam et al., 2005). Given that the aim of this program was to assist ex-prisoners and community-based offenders with reintegration through employment, it is not surprising that subsequent employment participation rates of clients were higher than for non-participating clients.

In terms of preferred practice of employment programs for ex-prisoners, Holzer, Raphael and Stoll (2002) emphasised pre-release training and preparation, case management services incorporating referrals for substance use treatment and other relevant support, education or training activities such as those relevant to improving so-called soft skills, and training related more specifically to the needs of the employer. In addition, transitional work experience over a three to six month period was also identified as important, both in terms of improving work-readiness skills and as an indication to employers that the individual could maintain short-term employment. Provision of job placement assistance and the existence of post-employment support such as job-coaching activities were also identified by the authors as important features of post-release employment programs.

Several other investigators have identified similar elements of preferred practices of employment programs including collaboration with other support services, provision of support services, and direct follow-up with participants (Sarno et al., 2000). Roberts, Barton, Buchanan, and Goldson (1997) affirmed that the establishment of strong local partnerships was one of the main factors contributing to the success of many employment programs. The importance of ensuring training is matched to employment opportunities and needs in the local community is also an important element of preferred practice. Research in Australia has shown that well-designed intervention programs that are appropriately matched to the target population can be effective in reducing re-offending. Access to good programs may impact significantly on outcomes for prisoners or offenders under community supervision as well (Dunne, 2000; Ward, 2001). Additional features shared by successful post-release employment programs include assisting prisoners to develop skills for appropriately disclosing criminal history, providing incentives to employers, providing job retention skills, and the provision of long-term follow-up support (e.g., Webster et al., 2001). The *Straight For Work* program was evaluated in terms of program integrity and how
the program logic and design reflects current research and good practice models (see Chapter 5).

There are also elements of poor practices associated with failure to perform effectively in providing employment assistance and support. For example, poor performance of employment programs has been linked to limited and short-term funding (Downes, 1998, cited in Sarno et al., 2000; Roberts et al., 1997). Additional criticisms include inadequate recruitment procedures, poor or inadequate selection criteria, lack of breadth in employment training, and an inability to consider the ambitions and interests of the client (Downes, 1998, cited in Sarno et al., 2000).

Drug and Alcohol Programs

As a group, ex-prisoners require immediate and responsive programs that address their multiple and varied needs. There is evidence that well-conceived job-training and placement programs can be effective in improving employment opportunities for ex-prisoners, particularly when combined with other support services that address issues of substance use, health, and accommodation (Lawrence, Mears, Dubin, & Travis, 2002).

There has been a growing research interest from Australia, New Zealand, Britain, Canada, the United States, and Europe, in drug treatment programs for prisoners and ex-prisoners. Drug treatment programs include prison-based education programs, such as needle exchange programs (e.g., Stoever, 2002) and psycho-educational programs such as the Ending Offending program (e.g., Crundall & Deacon, 1997). An alternative to prison-based education programs are non-residential treatment programs that are more intensive in terms of their time commitment for prisoners, with the focus often on relapse prevention (e.g., Delnef, 2001; Pearson & Lipton, 1999). Another type of non-residential treatment program offered in prison takes a pharmacological approach to reducing drug dependency, such as methadone treatment. The Opioid Substitution Therapy Program is an example of a non-residential program that has recently been implemented in Victorian prisons (Office of the Correctional Services Commissioner [OCSC], 2003). Twelve-step programs (e.g., Narcotics Anonymous, Alcoholics Anonymous) also operate in Victorian prisons, and are useful, particularly when combined with formal treatment (Centre for Applied Psychological Research [CAPR], 2003).

The most intensive prison-based intervention programs are unit-based residential treatments. These intervention programs operate mainly in the United States and Britain, and are also known as therapeutic community programs, boot camps, and drug-free treatment units. Several Australian prisons contain drug-free treatment units. These intervention programs provide highly structured, long-term, intensive support to chronic drug and/or alcohol users, and are typically implemented in a separate living environment in the prison. Depending on the treatment regime, in-prison programs such as those described above have been shown to produce positive effects, including reduced recidivism and reduced substance use (see CAPR, 2003).

There is also a wide range of community-based, non-residential and residential treatment programs that ex-prisoners may access upon their release from prison. Community-based programs incorporate counselling, education, and cognitive-
behavioural principles, among other approaches, with varying success in terms of reductions in substance use and recidivism (see CAPR, 2003). Those community-based programs that are more structured with a focus on treatment per se, appear more effective than general approaches incorporating support and counselling (CAPR, 2003). Throughcare models of treatment for drug offenders can also be effective (see Burrows, Clarke, Davison, Tarling, & Webb, 2001). The Compulsory Drug Treatment Program comprises three stages including closed detention, semi-open detention, and community custody incorporating a range of therapeutic programs. Dillwynia also offers a range of drug and alcohol treatment programs.

2.5 Mentoring of Adult Offenders

There are relatively few studies which have examined the efficacy of mentoring programs for adult offenders. Rather, studies have tended to focus on mentoring among specific offender groups, such as youth offenders, indigenous offenders, women offenders, and those at risk of offending. There are also numerous studies relating to academic and business mentoring. In the section that follows, a review is provided on mentoring programs for offenders, after which an overview of relative benefits for mentor and mentor participants is provided.

Mentoring programs for offenders

Numerous studies emphasise that the relationship between the mentor and mentoree is a determinant of successful outcomes (Colley, 2003; DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005; Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Wilczynski, Culvenor, Cunneen, Schwartzkoff, & Reed-Gilbert, 2003). As an example, the Big Brothers Big Sisters program in the United States is the largest and oldest mentoring program for children and youth (including young offenders). With regard to this program, Grossman and Rhodes (2002) recently examined how numerous personal and social factors of mentors varied with the duration of mentoring relationships. In terms of the length of mentoring relationships, the authors found that relatively fewer relationships ended within six months (19%), compared to those lasting either 7-11 months (36%) or 12 months or more (45%). Sharper declines in feelings of self-worth and scholastic ability were associated with youth who were in short-term mentoring relationships (less than six months) than for youth who had never been matched. Moreover, higher levels of self-worth, social tolerance, and scholastic ability were reported for youth who were in longer-term mentoring relationships (more than 12 months). Indicative of the benefits on long-lasting matches, this latter group also reported an improved relationship with their parents, greater satisfaction with school, and diminished drug and alcohol use. Like findings have been reported in other studies (e.g., Slicker & Palmer, 1993), indicating the importance of close matching and long-term commitment to the program by mentors and mentorees as a contributor to effective outcomes.

Additional factors that may contribute to program efficacy were examined in a meta-analysis of 55 evaluations of youth mentoring programs by DuBois, Halloway, Valentine, and Cooper (2002). Despite generally small effect sizes, important program features included the quality of mentor training, frequency of contact, planned activities for mentors and mentorees, support and involvement of parents, and program monitoring. Likewise, Sipe (1996) identified three characteristics
essential to success of mentoring programs, including (1) screening of mentors in terms of their commitment and how that may impact on the match; (2) orientation and training to equip mentors with information and strategies to maximise relationship development; and (3) ongoing support and supervision. Although important, matching was seen as the least critical element.

In an evaluation of the mentoring component of the Make It Work Program in Victoria, Graffam and colleagues (2002) identified several elements critical to participant engagement including positive guidance to mentors in the form of information and encouragement. Program features such as flexibility, reasonable autonomy, and access to varied resources were also described as advantageous.

It is important to note that the efficacy of mentoring programs is often bound up in a set of interventions of which the mentoring program is a part (Blechman et al., 2000; DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005; Jones-Brown & Henriques, 1997; Mertinko, Novotney, Baker, & Lange, 2000). It can be difficult to identify the singular effect of mentorship (Beier, Rosenfeld, Spitalny, Znisky, & Bontempo, 2000) because mentoring programs are usually one element of a larger intervention program. This is the case with the Straight For Work program, with mentoring an important element among education, training, work experience and employment assistance.

Numerous difficulties have been identified in the establishment and operation of mentoring programs. The most common difficulties experienced by mentoring programs in Australia are management and support (ARTD Management, 2002; Senior, 1999). For example, an external evaluation of the mentoring component of the Perth-based Aboriginal Family Supervision Program (AFSP) reported negative outcomes related to inadequate case management, recording, and accountability. Similarly, an external evaluation of One2One mentoring program in New South Wales identified management problems as a contributor to negative outcomes. It appears crucial, therefore, that appropriate and accountable plans and practices regulating a range of issues need to be developed and implemented (National Crime Prevention, 1999; Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2000; Rhodes, 2001; Sipe, 1996; Tierney, Grossman, & Resch, 2000; Wilczynski et al., 2003).

Quality mentoring and the development of effective mentors appear integral to cultivating the appropriate environment for positive change (Hartley, 2004; Wilczynski et al., 2003). Moreover, mutually beneficial outcomes are associated with mentoring relationships (e.g., Hartley, 2004). By strengthening networks of support in local communities a broader base of reciprocal understanding between ex-prisoners and offenders and other community members can result. In the next section, the benefits of mentoring for mentors are described.

**Benefits of mentoring for mentors**

Mentoring has been identified as a mutual personal transformation process, through which both mentors and mentorees report positive outcomes (Graffam et al., 2002). Numerous studies have examined the benefits of mentoring for mentors. McLearn, Colasanto, and Schoen (1998) surveyed 1,504 adult mentors of youth, of which 75 percent stated that their experience had had a "very positive" impact on their lives. Mentoring was identified as a hiatus from their professional lives and a chance to
contribute to the community. In addition, 83 percent of the adult mentors reported that they had learned or gained something personally from the experience, including insight into the life of others, improved patience, friendship, a sense of usefulness, and an opportunity to acquire skills.

More recently, Philip and Hendry (2000) conducted a qualitative analysis consisting of a series of in-depth interviews with 30 mentorees and 30 adult mentors. Mentors described the experience of mentoring as highly positive, providing insight into the everyday lives of mentors and an understanding of their past and present challenges. The development of positive and more reciprocal relationships with people in different circumstances was attributed to the mentoring experience. Likewise, in a survey of 232 mentors from 27 mentoring programs in England and Wales, the majority of mentors reported a sense of achievement (83%), improved understanding of mentorees (80%), and improved communication skills as outcomes of the mentoring relationship (Lines, 2000). Improved self confidence was reported by over a third (38%) of mentors. Mentors also reported improved skills in listening, planning, understanding of others' problems and increased knowledge and understanding of other cultures.

Beyond mentor gains, some investigators have alluded to potential shortfalls associated with mentoring relationships. For example, Colley (2002) suggested that power dynamics may play a role in some relationships. Although the experience of mentoring may not always be a rewarding one for mentors, overall the benefits to mentors, mentorees, and the community from well-conceived mentoring programs are tangible (Farrington & Cold, 2003; Grossman, 1999; Jones-Brown & Henriques, 1997; McCluskey, Noller, Lamoureux, & McCluskey, 2002; Wilczynski et al., 2003). The next section identifies potential benefits of mentoring for mentorees.

**Benefits of mentoring for mentorees**

The aim of correctional mentoring is behaviour change through information and/or resource exchange (e.g. Flaxman, Ascher, & Harrington, 1988; Freedman, 1993). Mentoring for offenders has proven successful in reducing further involvement in crime (DuBois et al., 2002; Grossman & Garry, 1997; Sipe, 1996). While mentoring may be associated with reduced recidivism, it can also facilitate social and personal development gains for mentorees within a community-based context. Offender mentoring programs may be viewed, therefore, as catalysts for changing offender behaviour and creating a greater understanding of normative community behaviour and societal values (Adams & Fischer, 2001; Craine, 1997). Additional benefits to mentorees include psychological and emotional sustenance, community connectedness, and opportunity networks that may cultivate enhanced self image, as well as behavioural and attitudinal changes (deAnda, 2001; Flaxman, et al., 1988). Volunteer mentoring programs for ex-prisoners have also been associated with the development of employment potential (Buck, 2000), improved self concept, and reduced substance abuse (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002). In fact, the mentoring relationship has been described as an evolutionary process that takes time to develop, but which forms the basis for long-term attitudinal and behavioural change by participants (Graffam et al., 2002). Offenders are arguably one of the most marginalised groups of individuals to whom mentoring programs have been offered.
The *Straight For Work* program includes a mentoring component because of the potential benefits outlined above.

## 2.6 Recidivism

Empirical studies with ex-prisoner samples typically focus on recidivism as an outcome measure of success/failure in effective reintegration into the community. Recidivism may be viewed as the failure to desist from crime (Visher & Travis, 2003) and is typically quantified by an individual's rearrest, reconviction (irrespective of sentencing outcome), or their return to prison (e.g., Langan & Levin, 2002). If well-defined, recidivism is a measure that is easy to conceptualise and measure and, accordingly, has been applied extensively in the correctional services field. Numerous studies have examined the association between recidivism and other factors relevant to personal conditions, employment and education, and other life conditions. In addition, the efficacy of treatment programs has also been examined extensively in terms of their effect on recidivism. Each of these areas relevant to recidivism is outlined in the section that follows.

### Personal Conditions

Numerous studies have examined the relation between personal characteristics and a return to prison. For example, Langan and Levin (2002) examined conditions that predicted recidivism for more than 270,000 prisoners released in the United States in 1994. The majority of prisoners (67.5%) were re-arrested within a three year period and 51.8 percent returned to prison. Men (53%) were more likely than women (39.4%), and African-Americans (54.2%) were more likely than Caucasians (49.9%) to return to prison. Marriage may be associated with lower recidivism, with the percentage of prisoners who have never been married increasing as the number of imprisonments rise, although this relationship is complex and difficult to decipher (Rawnsley, 2003).

### Employment and Education

Numerous factors in pre-prison life including employment history, education level, substance use, social support, physical health, and mental health have been associated with recidivism. Gendreau, Little, and Goggin (1996) provided a meta-analysis of the literature on recidivism among adults and found that the strongest predictors of recidivism included lack of employment skills, limited education, and criminal background. With respect to employment specifically, it is apparent that lower recidivism is associated with employment (Harer, 1994; Rahill-Beuler & Kretzer, 1997; Uggen, 2000). For example, an early study by Harer (1994) identified that ex-prisoners who had prior full-time employment or who had attended secondary school before they entered prison had a significantly lower recidivism rate than those who did not have these experiences. Australian prisoner statistics support the relation between re-offending and unemployment. On the basis of Australian prison census data, Rawnsley (2003) reported that 32 percent of individuals who had been imprisoned once in the period from 1993 to 2001 were employed prior to prison entry compared to 22 percent of prisoners who had been imprisoned on four occasions in this time frame. In other words, chronic re-offenders were less likely to be employed.
than first-time offenders. In fact, Corrections Victoria estimates that approximately 60–70 percent of people who re-offend are unemployed at the time that they re-offend (Victorian Department of Justice, 2001), indicating that unemployment is a key factor in recidivism. It is apparent, therefore, that unemployment and re-offending are a self-perpetuating system. Australian prisoner statistics also support a relationship between re-offending and low education, with prisoners with one prison sentence having typically higher levels of education than those with two or more periods of incarceration (Rawnsley, 2003).

Life Conditions
As remarked above, in the landmark meta-analysis of recidivism literature relating to adult offenders, Gendreau, and colleagues (1996) found that, while most of the predictors of recidivism were modest, many of the strongest predictors related to the life conditions of offenders. These included criminal background, prison misconduct, identifying with or having a close relationship to their peers, anti-social personality, displaying attitudes supportive of a criminal lifestyle, and lack of education or employment skills. As well, conflict with family and other significant persons, family rearing practices, and substance use were also predictive of recidivism. The weakest predictors of recidivism included family factors (i.e., separation from parents, broken home), social class of origin, intellectual functioning, and particular indices of emotional state including anxiety, depression, neuroticism, and psychiatric symptomatology.

Reidivism and Treatment Programs
There have been a number of reviews from North America, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Europe over the last 10 years which have examined the efficacy of treatment programs. In fact, there have been at least 50 meta-analytic reviews of offender treatment or rehabilitation (Lipsey & Cullen, 2007) that have provided support for the efficacy of prison-based and community-based treatment programs in reducing recidivism (e.g., Andrews, Zinger, Hoge, Bonta, Gendreau, & Cullen, 1990; Dowden & Andrews, 1999b, 2000, 2003; Hollin, 1999; Lipsey, 1992; Lipsey & Wilson, 1998; Lösel, 1995; Redondo, Garrido, & Sanchez-Meca, 1997, cited in Redondo, Sanchez-Meca, & Genoves, 2001; Wilson, Gallagher, & Mackenzie, 2000). For example, reduced recidivism has been associated with program participation in prison, including those aimed at improving employment prospects and job skills, developing cognitive skills, and reducing substance abuse (e.g., Cullen, 2002; Gaes, Flanagan, Motiuk, & Stewart, 1999; Inciardi, Martin, Butzin, Hooper, & Harrison, 1997; Saylor & Gaes, 1997).

The findings from several early large-scale meta-analytic reviews of adult and juvenile treatment programs (e.g., Lipsey, 1992; Lösel, 1995) indicated about a 10 percent reduction in recidivism (Gendreau, Goggin, French, & Smith, 2006), while a later study by Lipsey and Wilson (1998) reported about a 12 percent reduction in recidivism for the ‘average’ treatment program provided to juvenile offenders. Moreover, McGuire (2000) combined the 18 meta-analytic reviews conducted between 1985 and 2000 relating to various types of prison-based and community-based treatment programs. Results of the meta-analytic reviews indicate a reduction in recidivism of between 5 percent and 10 percent, although some individual studies produced larger effect sizes (McGuire, 2000), indicating that some interventions were
more effective at reducing recidivism than others. On the basis of meta-analytic reviews such as those described above, there is a consensus, therefore, that treatment programs are generally effective in reducing recidivism.

More recently, the principles of risk, need, and responsivity of offender treatment programs have been examined in addition to several other principles of treatment effectiveness, such as the therapeutic integrity of the program (see Andrews & Bonta, 2003). Findings have typically confirmed that correctional treatment plays a key role in reduced recidivism (see Lipsey & Cullen, 2007). More specifically, larger effect sizes indicative of reduced recidivism have been associated with behavioural/social learning programs than for non-behavioural treatment programs (e.g., Andrews et al., 1990; Dowden & Andrews, 1999a, 1999b, 2000, 2003; Lipsey, 1995). As well, those programs that targeted criminogenic needs have been reported as more effective in reducing recidivism than those programs that focused on non-criminogenic needs (e.g., Dowden & Andrews, 2000, 2003). It should be noted, however, that when studies are grouped together for meta-analysis, it is likely that some studies have a large effect on recidivism, while others have little or no effect on recidivism (Howells et al., 1999).

2.7 Summary of the Literature Review

The cumulative impact of disadvantage experienced by ex-prisoners can make it extremely difficult and effortful to achieve positive life change and successful reintegration into the community. The likelihood that unassisted individuals have the material, physical, psychological, and practical resources to overcome complex, inter-related barriers is, in many cases, extremely low. The wide-ranging difficulties faced by ex-prisoners in achieving a positive lifestyle change are clearly related to broader circumstances of disadvantage in their lives. It is apparent that achieving successful transition into the general community and positive change is particularly difficult for individuals with complex and multiple support needs. It is in this context and with a client group of prisoners with a disability and other co-morbid conditions that the Straight For Work program operated in NSW. Expectations for achievement must be informed by this context.

Moreover, ex-prisoners typically have significant and comprehensive support needs that can change very quickly. To a large extent, programs specifically aimed at supporting these individuals, reducing re-offending, and promoting reintegration within the community have been prison-based, pre-release programs. Community-based programs generally experience high program attrition and achieve rather low rates of success in terms of program objectives and targets. This is largely due to the experience of multiple disadvantage and often intractable problems by the client group.

More effective programs are understood to be those that offer comprehensive support (support across service domains over longer periods of time), and that have a throughcare component. High rates of recidivism are widely reported both nationally and internationally, and the Sydney locale of the program is no exception. Mentoring programs offer the prospect of assisting in reducing recidivism by promoting positive lifestyle change through personal contact that facilitates social
learning, formation of normative relations, and behaviour and attitude change. It is with this client group and in this context that the Straight For Work program has operated.
Chapter 3: *Straight For Work*

Program Process Evaluation

The process evaluation begins with a brief description of the methodology that has been employed, followed by a description of the *Straight For Work* 'program logic' and program design. Next, the integrity of program delivery is analysed and discussed through the presentation of results of the interviews that were conducted. Finally, there is a summary of the results of the process evaluation that includes extensive analytical discussion of the results.

3.1 Methodology for the Process Evaluation

The process evaluation that has been conducted has focused on program logic and design, management structures and processes, as well as delivery of the program. Consistent with the evaluation brief, attention has been paid to evaluating the program in terms of program integrity, program effectiveness, and recommendations for program improvement. There have been two main methodologies employed in the process evaluation. One is desktop analysis, and the other is conduct and analysis of stakeholder interviews.

Desktop analysis involved collection and review of all documents pertinent to the development and delivery of the program. These included planning documents, the submission document that resulted in funding from the National Community Crime Prevention Programme, service model documents, manuals, training materials, information materials, relevant correspondence, and promotional materials. The stakeholder interviews component entailed conducting extensive interviews with ten stakeholders.

There were three interviewees from *Straight For Work* including the former program manager and two case managers. Seven interviewees from the Department of Corrective Services included the Governor/Director of the CDTCC, the Case Coordinator of the CDTCC, the Custodial Manager of the CDTCC, the Education Officer of the CDTCC, the Custodial Manager – Assistant Supervisor of the CDTCC, the Throughcare and Placement Coordinator of the Community Offender Support Program at Dillwynia Women’s Correctional Centre, and an Education Officer from Dillwynia. Three mentors were also interviewed. For several reasons, it was not possible to interview program participants: a long delay in ethics approval from DCS meant that several participants had already disengaged; some participants were unavailable due to work placements in the community; and there was a general reluctance to be interviewed. A detailed description of interview content and procedure is provided in Appendix 1.
3.2 Program Logic

In order to understand the "logic" that underlies the Straight For Work program, it is important to understand its origin. Straight For Work is a community investment initiative of WISE, a not-for-profit employment service provider. In early 2006, WISE initiated discussion with the NSW Department of Corrective Services, The Compulsory Drug Treatment Correctional Centre, and Dillwynia Women's Correctional Centre regarding the development of the Straight For Work program. In addition, feedback was invited from local community service providers, local government, community representatives, academia, and potential participants in understanding this area of crime prevention in Greater Western Sydney.

This collaboration led to the development of a draft Straight For Work Program Model which was based on expertise from research in best practice models and a series of consultations between the WISE Melbourne Make It Work team, WISE Disability Employment Network NSW, the Regional Manager of NSW Department of Corrective Services, the General Manager and Throughcare Coordinator of Dillwynia Prison, and the Manager of Compulsory Drug Treatment Correctional Centre. The draft program design and logic were further analysed and refined by members of the School of Psychology at Deakin University.

The final proposed model and service elements were subsequently presented to various key stakeholders and eventuated in the Straight For Work program which formed the basis of a WISE submission for funding to the National Community Crime Prevention Programme in November 2006. The application for funding was successful, and the Straight For Work operated between July, 2007 and June, 2009. This evaluation covers the two-year period of program operation. There was initially some delay in the commencement of the program which may have contributed to a minor shortfall from targets in the first year of operation.

Prior to Straight For Work, WISE had a great deal of experience and an excellent reputation providing support to participants with complex and high levels of support need, as well as some previous direct experience working with prisoners with a disability and other co-morbid conditions through its disability employment service (DEN), its Job Network service, the Make It Work Program, and its Personal Support Program. That basic knowledge has some implications for the "logic" that underlies the program. Specifically, there was recognition of the need to be flexible and a willingness to modify thinking and practice as the program has developed. Nevertheless, there is a distinct and clear "logic" to the Straight For Work program.

Elements of Program Logic

An important element of program logic is the assumptions the designers of the program have about the program and its prospective participants. A second element relates to participants and their needs. There are several elements to the logic behind the Straight For Work program.

The first element relates to the common individual characteristics of the client group. It was understood from the outset (and much more fully over time) that prisoners with a disability and other conditions of co-morbidity generally have:
• comprehensive support needs that are often intensive and dynamic/changing as well;
• a severe lack of resources (education, skills, work experience, mainstream social experience, healthy social network, and finances); and
• a fatalistic view of their future resulting from low self-esteem, a history of failure, lack of positive role models, and experience in a fatalistic ‘culture’ (as examples).

Participants in the *Straight For Work* program were primarily males who have a diagnosable mental illness. A high proportion of the participants share a long history of poly-drug and intravenous drug use and have participated in in-prison treatment programs which do provide treatment gains, but most of these gains are not maintained following release. Other key characteristics of the participants at Dillwynia and CDTCC include a history of criminal behaviour; high rate of recidivism; homelessness; lack of support structures or family; negative social supports who can pose significant barriers; dysfunctional family backgrounds; lack of life skills (e.g., conflict resolution); marginal coping skills; poor social competencies, including underdeveloped communication skills; low level socio-economic backgrounds; minimal levels of education, particularly low literacy; poor physical and mental health; psychological symptoms associated with the social stigma and alienation of being labelled as a dangerous criminal or an offender; anger issues; long-term unemployment, spotty, or no employment history; and a limited repertoire of relevant labour market skills.

Given these very common features of multiple disadvantage the design of the *Straight For Work* program has taken into account the need for:
• a ‘running start’;
• supportive relationships;
• provision of ongoing support; and
• program flexibility.

This gives rise to the second element of the logic of the *Straight For Work* program which relates to an assumption of comprehensive and ongoing support needs. A decision was made from the outset to assist prisoners with a disability and other co-morbid conditions to successfully re-enter the community by working with them 3 months prior to their release and continuing 9 months post-release. The inclusion of a pre-release component is based on the assumption that it is important to give this participant group a “running start” in developing skills prior to prison release. This is an important part of the program logic.

Another important element to this logic is that the program provides throughcare incorporating complimentary services and support to prisoners with a disability within and beyond incarceration. This is based on the assumption that this group demonstrates a need for on-going support and that supportive relationships are critical to success. In addition, the program adopts a holistic approach incorporating the key elements of education, training, work experience, employment, and mentoring services.
This wide-ranging approach is based on the assumption that programs for this participant group need to be flexible in design and delivery. This is a critical element of the program logic. While the focus is on vocational support for ex-prisoners, the Straight For Work program also recognises the importance of effective mental health, drug and alcohol, housing, and other welfare support as critical. In this regard, the need for program flexibility is recognised in terms of working with multiple providers, in addition to participants whose circumstances and needs are complex and change quickly.

The logic is that, using these approaches, it should be easier to:

- assist individuals with positive lifestyle change – to increase socialisation and life skills as well as citizenship;
- reduce re-offending and drug-related crimes that are costly to the community by assisting participants in demonstrating positive change; and
- break patterns of behaviour and cycles of repeated movement through the system before those patterns and cycles are (more) entrenched.

Additionally, the target group of prisoners with a disability and other co-morbid conditions, particularly females, were/are not supported by any similar programs specific to their needs. With these basic elements of a “logic”, the program commenced and operated for the two years that funding allowed.

3.3 Program Design

A program’s design is derived from its logic. In the case of the Straight For Work program, although the basic assumptions were fairly clearly understood and articulated from the outset, with respect to program structure, there has been a flexibility and fluidity that derives, to a certain extent, from participant need. Straight For Work operates within a case management model, with a strong emphasis on individual service and flexibility. Services provided by Straight For Work include at:

**Pre-release**
- Orientation and assessment;
- Supported referrals to essential services;
- Pre-employment training and education;
- Job skills acquisition with simulated interviews with volunteer mentors;
- Access to partner employees via prison based expos; and
- Linkage to a trained community mentor.

**Post-release**
- Linkage to essential external support services;
- On-going case management providing individualised assistance to address complex multiple needs;
- On-going mentoring; and
- Training and employment placement with WISE employer partners or other relevant labour market options.

Above the foundation assumptions and basic principles that drive practice, there is a relationship between the program’s logic and the external world of the criminal justice system. Part of the logic underlying *Straight For Work* is that employment plays a significant role in prisoner reintegration and, therefore, contributes to a reduction in re-offending. This is evident through WISE’s internal focus of the program on ‘reduced re-offending and community reintegration through employment assistance’.

With respect to direct service to individual participants, some of the assumptions driving the *Straight For Work* program include: the need for long-term support; likelihood of slow and sometimes intermittent progress; need for basic skill development and formal training in relation to pre-employment preparation; comprehensive support needs and need to refer participants to others services such as housing, health services, drug and alcohol treatment, and other welfare support services; and need for a mentor to assist participants in socialization and provide base level ongoing support. The relationship between these assumptions, adopted early, and the service activities listed above should be clear. There is a strong cohesion between the program’s logic, its structural elements, and its intended practices. These assumptions are very strongly supported by the literature and are borne out in everyday program delivery.

The program’s logic, in general, and the case management model in particular, call for a high degree of participant involvement on the part of staff, as well as maintaining strong links with other services relevant to the participant group. The model suggests collaboration between program staff, Dillwynia, and the CDTCC in relation to referrals, participant progress, and outcomes. Program staff must also maintain links with a wide range of community-based services for purposes of supported referral. Participants are expected to maintain contact and communicate with program staff, but also often have reporting requirements to the court or corrections facility, as well as treatment, training, housing, and other support/assistance contacts. This comprehensive model of support is intended to lead to primary outcomes of sustained employment and/or enrolment in and completion of training courses, together with secondary gains in social development, improved drug and alcohol outcomes, and increased stability across life domains, which together lead to reduced re-offending.

Finally, the program targets a particular client group (adult prisoners with a disability and other co-morbid conditions). The participant group is one that does not typically get other forms of support, so the group especially fits the original program brief. Because of the complexity of individual circumstance and the tendency to re-offend, often participants do have other obligations that are pending or must be served. As the program grew and evolved, the intended target group came to consist of a broad range of individuals with varied and diverse backgrounds and criminal histories.

### 3.4 Program Delivery

Overall management of program delivery was achieved through internal reporting to WISE senior management and the board of directors by the *Straight For Work* 

35
Program Manager and the Community Investment Division Manager. This process helped reinforce the focus of the program on promoting positive life change and reintegration within the community because *Straight For Work* was (and is) a community investment initiative of WISE. The focus of reporting while the program was operating was on quality of service delivery in terms of partner and participant relations and satisfaction, as well as achievement of key performance indicator (KPI) targets. Relevant key performance targets included:

- number of participants accepted on the program;
- number of participants who completed training;
- number of participants with pre- and post-release plans completed;
- number of post-release essential services outcomes (i.e., accommodation, drug and alcohol treatment, education/training/employment support, health/medical service);
- number of mentors recruited and trained;
- number of mentorships established;
- number of mentorships reaching 13 weeks;
- number of mentorships reaching 26 weeks;
- number of participants placed in employment;
- number of participants reaching 13 week employment outcomes;
- number of participants reaching 26 week employment outcomes;
- number of participants receiving a structured exit from the program; and
- number of training courses completed.

Results pertaining to performance in relation to these key performance indicators are reported in Chapter 4 which reports the results of the outcomes evaluation. In this chapter, we investigate the processes by which the program was delivered and these objectives were pursued. Our analysis of program delivery processes is in terms of the extent to which delivery processes provide quality of service delivery and how well they support achievement of key performance indicator (KPI) targets. The stakeholder interviews provide a great deal of information about program delivery and have informed our analysis to a large extent. What follows is a summary of those interview results. Results are presented below in separate sub-sections that refer to the perspectives of WISE staff who were working in the *Straight For Work* program (including two former senior staff who had involvement in the program for most of the two years that the program operated, but departed prior to its conclusion), staff from the Department of Corrective Services from the two partner/host locations (Dillwynia and the CDTCC), and mentors in the program.
3.5 *Straight For Work*: WISE Program Delivery Staff Perspective

The first question related to the respondent's role and responsibilities within the *Straight For Work* program. One individual recounted their role in detail, describing their role in initially launching the program, contacting stakeholders, dealing with custodial staff and raising initial awareness of the program. They also were responsible for setting up the training materials and further developing the training materials that were provided. The role progressed to obtaining referrals for participants from correctional services; conducting initial assessments; delivering training within Dillwynia and the CDTCC; advertising, recruitment, and marketing of mentors; screening of mentors; delivery of training to mentors; case management of the mentor and participant in the community; and referral to community services.

The training component was described as 50 hours of training for participants (delivered at both Dillwynia and the CDTCC), and 30 hours of training for mentors, in addition to the development of the training program itself.

The respondents' experience of delivering prisoner/offender support programs was mixed. Two respondents had limited experience, while another had substantial experience, with a correctional services and training/life coaching/counselling background. Two respondents indicated prior experience with respect to employment programs for socially marginalised people, both relating to the long-term unemployed.

The respondents held the shared view that one of the key elements of the program was matching mentors with participants. Accessing support for other issues such as drug use was also identified as important, as was getting participants into rehabilitation at the drug centre. Another key element was identifying participants that had a direct need for long-term community support. Those participants were viewed ideally as lacking self-management skills, (repeat) recidivists, and otherwise individuals who would benefit from pre-training prior to release and assistance with job-seeking and other related skills. Other key aspects identified included recruitment of volunteer mentors and the delivery of training to mentors.

There was general agreement that reduced recidivism and getting a job were the program outcome objectives. Moreover, the objective of breaking the cycle of crime and criminal behaviour through mentoring was identified, as well as more general objective outcomes related to providing an opportunity for the participant to learn successful living and coping skills via the mentoring process and links with community services. The post-release elements of the program were also described in considerable detail, including the multiple supervised mentoring meetings, development of their case plan, supporting and funding community activities, building social networks, building health and personal care networks, building a sense of belonging in the community, and linking the ex-offender with Job Network or Disability Employment Network to support their employment success.

Respondents were also asked whether they thought the objectives were realistic. One respondent stated that the objectives were realistic for some individuals, but not for others such as juveniles who are in arrested development and drug-affected participants from Dillwynia. The negative impact of methadone on work-ability was
noted by several respondents; being drug-free was clearly viewed as crucial to success. The need for improved life skills was also raised, as was the need to be linked to in-prison services that address their specific issues.

Some concerns related to program delivery were identified. The difficulty in finding a place for the training to be delivered among the many other programs delivered by the Department of Corrective Services was identified as problematic, particularly in the early stages of the program. This problem, among others, resulted in a low intake initially, and was partly related to the voluntary nature of the program. A large dropout of students from Dillwynia Correctional Centre was also identified, again attributed at least in part, to the voluntary nature of the program, and the fact that other programs that were available in the same time slot had more appeal to some individuals. At the CDTCC, the program was made mandatory after 6 months for the referrals received. As a consequence, participant numbers increased.

The fact that there was no consequence for non-attendance to classes by inmates was identified as problematic. Other factors that impacted on program delivery included the transfer of offenders to other prisons without notice, roster changes, union meetings, breakdown in communication, and prison lock-downs. Some problems were also associated with the transition to Stage 2 training. Meeting the extensive diversity and high workload associated with the program was viewed as particularly challenging by one respondent. Moreover, in terms of case management the need to assist the facilitation of mentors to mentorees who had no vehicle and the high travel needs associated with case management were identified as problematic.

Recruitment of mentors was initially described as slower than expected. The gender imbalance in the program was viewed unfavourably by one respondent. Reduced intake of mentors was attributed to the unsuitability of certain mentors, and candidates being located beyond the Sydney West area, among others. Recruitment of mentorees was described as involving extensive meetings with key personnel. The numerous difficulties in matching mentors to mentorees were identified by one respondent, as well as problems associated with training mentors.

In terms of staff training, two respondents indicated that they were not given any training. One of those respondents suggested that they had no need for training given their previous experience, and another suggested that mentor training would have been useful for new staff. A third respondent stated that they received additional training in terms of the Diploma of Health Counselling, as well as security training in correctional services as part of delivering training in the centres.

In terms of the program material, respondents generally held the view that the material was suitable for program participants, that it was well received by the individuals, well delivered, and that the interactivity worked particularly well. One respondent was less positive, suggesting that pre-release training should focus more on daily management skills rather than job-seeking. In addition, the suggestion was made that the information content did not sufficiently cater for people with language and literacy problems, with more visual aids needed. The length of time in training was also questioned, with a suggested improvement being to focus more on mentors and developing a stronger case management plan. The fact that the material was changed along the way to suit the participant group was discussed; the material was
made less theoretical and more activity-based as initially it did not fit the participant group. In this way, the program was adapted to better fit participant needs.

Respondents were also asked to characterise the relationship with other key stakeholders in the program. Collectively, the relationship with the multiple stakeholders was viewed as good, although less so at Dillwynia as there were not as many case coordinators. The intermittent contact from Dillwynia Correctional Centre to Straight For Work was attributed to the enormous work load, the multitude of programs that have to be taken into consideration, and the lack of staff to cater for the capacity of inmates. One respondent remarked that the relationships with some stakeholders were less consistent. Another respondent indicated that the stakeholders were very open-minded, were willing to work more collaboratively together and to reduce overlaps, and that time was allocated to review and assess the implementation of the program. Regular communication was provided regarding referrals, case management, and supporting the participants into appropriate services. In terms of improving relationships with stakeholders, one respondent suggested that the implementation of more specific guidelines relating to working in partnership would be useful. As well, more regularity in the meeting schedule was viewed as ideal in order to maintain the on-going nature of relationships.

Another question related to potential improvements in the program for offender participants post-release. One respondent suggested that there is a potential for improved skill development for mentors, as well as different levels of supervision need. The need for more treatment options at Dillwynia was noted. While the close fit between the program and CDTCC was acknowledged, the observation that the fit was not as natural between the program and Dillwynia was mentioned by several respondents.

A large number of potential improvements were identified by another respondent. The respondent believed that the case management process would have been improved if they were supplied with additional information by correctional services regarding the participants' criminal history, behaviour assessment, and health. An inadequate relationship with Dillwynia in terms of support with housing arrangements post-release was identified that negatively impacted on the process of assisting participants and gaining housing ("they did not want to work with us"). The respondent also suggested that the case plans were received inconsistently from the throughcare officers which was problematic. In this regard, better communication with the throughcare officers and the case manager was viewed as ideal, particularly in terms of the release dates of offenders. Additional comments related to improving the skill sets of the case manager and trainers, gaining access to the Department of Corrective Services intranet (to access the participant and any alerts), and in that regard, having better communication between employees with DCS and the program staff.

Specific improvements relating to the program material, delivery, and program duration were also suggested by the same respondent. With respect to the program material, suggestions for improvement included more videos/DVDs, more visual aids, and creating a more simplified weekly plan. In terms of program delivery, a greater awareness of prisoner mental health and medical needs was desired, as well as greater understanding of other side-effects related to withdrawal from drug addiction.
In practical terms, more activities, simple tasks, and tasks relevant to community integration were suggested. With respect to program duration, the expressed view was that 30 hours of training would have been more than sufficient. Provision of training over a greater number of consecutive hours (‘solid training blocks’) was viewed as ideal, rather than providing training for 2.5 hours on a weekly basis (‘it dragged on’). The fact that there was already a framework for training the mentors and mentorees via the ‘Make it Work’ program developed by WISE was viewed as advantageous. The well-developed community networks arising from the positive reputation of WISE were also identified as a factor that facilitated the implementation of the Straight for Work program.

Respondents were questioned about the design and intention of the program and its development in delivery; in other words program integrity versus professional discretion in its implementation. The only comment in this regard was that the program was built on ideals and information gleaned from the literature and from other programs (e.g., ‘Make It Work’). The respondent was unsure how the program had evolved, although they expressed an understanding that things changed as the program developed.

Additional general comments were also solicited from the respondents. One respondent remarked that the program was the first of its kind in NSW with WISE, and that in their view, there was insufficient infrastructure to support a community program. In particular, the view held was that there was insufficient support and funding to deliver such an extensive program. The unique quality of the program was emphasised, and the fact that it had the capacity, given adequate support, to make a real contribution in working with ex-offenders in the community to prevent recidivism.

### 3.6 Straight For Work: Department of Corrective Services

**Staff Perspective**

Staff from the Department of Corrective Services were asked first about their role and responsibilities with respect to the program. Given that their roles were quite divergent, the collective responsibilities of the respondents covered areas including ensuring staff follow through on their tasks; management of standard operating procedures; access to prison and staff compliance; helping staff to separate their usual tasks from those associated with the program; initial referral, monitoring the program, and liaising with WISE; managing access for program staff; facilitation of training; identification of participants and referral; liaising with the education program; screening of participants and case management; and criminal record checks and selecting mentors.

Collectively, respondents indicated prior experience of reintegration programs for prisoners/offenders with a disability. In terms of the relative importance of the key elements of the program, respondents generally shared the view that training (including life skills training) was critical. Single comments were that training should be jointly facilitated and integrated with cognitive-behaviour therapy, is important to relationship building, and should be based on level of competence. The importance of mentoring (including managing mentorees) was emphasized. Employment assistance and assistance at the workplace was also identified as key elements. In
terms of the effect of key elements of the program on reintegration, respondents commented that mentoring is beneficial for providing pro-social contact, allows for negotiating the 'best' decision, is important for assisting with employment-related aspects, and fits with the 'good lives' model. It was acknowledged that progress can be slow, with outcomes depending on the participant's level of participation.

Respondents held the collective view that getting a job was extremely important to ex-prisoner community integration. The need for this group to have structure to their time, to learn how to balance their time and responsibilities, and to get used to working in the community was identified as important by one respondent. The multiple needs of these individuals were also acknowledged, including their disability profile. One respondent also suggested that women were not as compliant as men and are often socially excluded; with employment training important to break the cycle.

The multi-agency approach of the program was identified as one element that differentiates the Straight For Work program from other offender reintegration support programs. The fact that the men could stay at the CDTCC for Stage 2 of the program was also viewed positively, differentiating it from other reintegration support programs. Several positive aspects of the Straight For Work program were identified. Having external agencies coming into the prison was viewed positively, as was the outcome of having a job and the associated benefits in relation to improved self-esteem and social integration. The support, mentoring, and focus of the program were also positive aspects. Improved behaviour by the participants ('they have more to lose if they mess up') was also mentioned by one respondent. Another respondent stated that the Straight For Work program was a wonderful working model of throughcare, with training input an important element allowing prisoners to identify their needs prior to release.

Respondents were asked to identify difficult aspects of the Straight For Work program as they related to their own program. One respondent indicated that separation of tasks/roles was difficult; in particular, the dual role of the former program manager was identified as problematic and confusing for staff. The same individual indicated that communication with WISE was also difficult, and pointed out that the operations manual had not been ratified. Another individual suggested that, in terms of employment assistance, there were difficulties in getting work. That individual also stated that the mentor role was unclear and that the perception that those with a mentor were advantaged was another difficult aspect. Another respondent stated that numerous problems may arise from inadequate participant-mentor matching, and that employers needed to be supported and nurtured. Additional problems were that the participants can take advantage of mentors, and that they can become more demanding, sometimes beyond all proportions, as their self-esteem and self-worth improves.

Another question related to any discrepancies between the initial concept and design of the program and its delivery. Responses were divergent. Some related to mentors, including the need for more mentors, the need to cover their costs, the fact that they were difficult to find, the need for clearer boundaries for mentors and mentorees, and the need for a clearer framework for mentors. An additional respondent commented that management did not initially embrace the program, and in fact, expressed some
negativity. The philosophy of Dillwynia was viewed as consistent with that of Straight For Work but suggested that there was some conflict concerning the introduction of another employment agency into the mix ('they couldn't be on both programs'). The appeal of mentors to participants was acknowledged ('you can go out'). Other comments related to the agency not always functioning as a brokerage, and that some participants did not understand their part in the program and the expectations that people have of them.

The final question allowed for additional comment on the program. Once again, respondents expressed different views on the program. One respondent suggested that it would be better if the program was part of the case management at the Drug Treatment Centre, that the program team could be case managers, the program goals-based, and would work better as a work readiness program. A second respondent indicated that the initial difficulties were due to ignorance of the way the system worked and the nature of problems that they typically dealt with at the CDTCC. An additional respondent emphasised that WISE is a business and subsequently needs to make money; that there was insufficient resources, in particular, too few mentors; and that mentors should be matched to those who need the most assistance. The need for additional support for employers was acknowledged by another respondent. Another comment was that the program was great with good outcomes, and that it was a positive to have others who care about what happens to the participants.

The final respondent raised several issues. The earlier introduction of mentors was suggested, with more timely recruitment and training of mentors needed. The disability-focus was positively viewed, however it was suggested that there was insufficient time to accommodate some prisoners with a disability. The partnership with other employment services as it related to housing evolved, but was not evaluated; there was a need to evaluate what was happening at the crucial stage of 3 months post-release. It was also suggested that the program could benefit from a network of partners with a central case manager, possibly external to WISE. The respondent also commented that several basic things (e.g., fridge, house, furniture) were not accounted for by the program, and that they were not prepared for these practical needs. Work release was also suggested as potentially helpful.

### 3.7 Straight For Work: Mentor Perspective

The mentors were asked to comment on program areas relating to mentor recruitment, mentor training, participant-mentor match, the value of the mentoring component, and the experience of being a mentor. The mentors indicated that they were recruited in different ways, including contact initiated from WISE, via an email from a contact at the Department of Housing, and via a Family Network meeting. In terms of mentor training, the process varied somewhat, with one mentor indicating that they completed four days of training and another completing 10 hours for four Saturdays. All respondents indicated that they enjoyed the mentor training and that the training was well delivered. There was an indicated need for additional time for mentor training. In terms of the content, one mentor stated a need for more generic information relating to the Department of Housing, and so forth. Comments relating to
content were all positive, with highlights including discussion of daily life for people in an institution, role plays, information relating to people with drug addiction and schizophrenia, exploration of values/beliefs in relationships, and new tools for creating and maintaining trust. One mentor also commented that the content included fresh, interesting information, and some new tools.

The respondents indicated that a plan for mentor contact was adequately discussed during training. One mentor indicated that they needed more information about their mentoree, particularly regarding their life circumstances/family situation, and another suggested that a network of mentors may be useful in terms of comparing, and reflecting on, their experiences. Overall, the mentors were very positive with respect to the process involved in the participant-mentor match, indicating that the level and type of support provided was very good. One mentor indicated that the whole process took a long time (i.e., meeting, interview, assessment, training, and so on). Another mentor suggested that the process was difficult initially, largely due to the fact that they felt unprepared and would have liked additional information about the mentoree (e.g., criminal background, age, education, length of sentence, release date, state of health). That respondent indicated that the process improved with time, but provision of a profile of the mentoree (which they were told they would receive) would have been useful. There was little discussion about the effect of the participant-mentor match, with only one comment regarding the arrangement of meetings and the prioritisation of goals and issues.

In term of the value of the mentoring program, the mentors held the collective view that the mentoring component was excellent. The close attention to matching and the high level of support was, once again, positively appraised. One mentor indicated a close relationship with their mentoree, with the program having a definite benefit for the mentoree. For the mentors themselves, the value of the mentoring component was clearly a positive one. Collectively, the mentors acknowledged greater insight into the participants, an understanding that they have learned something valuable, and a feeling of accomplishment arising from their participation. There was an additional comment about the change in participant-mentor relationship as the participant moved through the stages of the program. Stage 2 was described as being good for acclimatizing the mentoree, with different challenges being associated with Stage 3. More information about the impact of prison release on the participant and how prison changes the individual was identified as a need in the training component, and the suggestion was made that ex-prisoners would make good mentors.

3.8 Summary

Program Logic and Design

To summarise, our analysis of the program logic and design of Straight For Work generally shows that the assumptions that underlie the program as well as its main design features make good sense in relation to the relevant literature and in relation to the immediate criminal justice operating context. The current and emerging trend in corrections is toward diversion programs and transition programs that result in reduced re-offending and community reintegration. That is the nature and the focus
of *Straight For Work*. The program logic and design is consistent with international and Australian literature on employment assistance for ex-prisoners and offenders, particularly the literature on specialist employment services. The program logic and design is also consistent with international and Australian literature on mentoring adult offenders, as well as the literature on support needs of prisoners/ex-prisoners which suggests that comprehensive and intensive support is necessary. Mentoring, particularly in the post-release transition phase, is also recognised as an element of good practice. In short, the program logic and design are consistent with the principles and beliefs about emerging “best practice” evident in the literature.

With these considerations in mind, we believe that the program model is fundamentally sound. Movement away from direct provision of a broad range of ancillary services and instead strengthening links and referrals with other relevant specialist services, as well as fostering professional relationships with accommodation, drug and alcohol, and other personal support agencies is recognised as leading to more efficient practices and more effective performance of core activities. These have all been features of the *Straight For Work* program model.

On a more specific level, there are several strong features of the program model. In terms of program design, the program’s structure and components are consistent with what is known about its target group’s characteristics and support needs. The emphasis on service partnerships and the planned processes for strengthening those partnerships are also strong features of program design, given the typically multiple, complex, and comprehensive support needs of the target group.

Nevertheless, there are some features of program logic and design that appear somewhat problematic in their own right. Disability does not appear to be, and may not be, the most prominent condition of co-morbidity affecting the process of reintegration of prisoners. Disability was, originally, the primary condition of eligibility for the *Straight For Work* program. Women, at least in a majority of cases, may not be primarily oriented toward vocational training and/or employment upon release, instead focusing on reunification with family and children. For women, employment may be a priority later in the transition process. By designing the program to draw participants from Dillwynia, the program model clearly placed major emphasis on employment for women prisoners. As it turned out, women prisoners comprised 37 percent of the participant sample over the two years of the program.

Following analysis of program outcomes that is presented in the next chapter, these elements of program logic and design will be discussed further in the concluding chapter of the report. Other than these two elements, which require investigation, the program’s assumptions and design features appear sound. Challenges for *Straight For Work* program delivery are mainly in regard to program delivery and maintaining program integrity in delivery rather than in relation to program logic and design.

**Challenges to Program Performance**

With respect to the integrity of program delivery, several challenges have been identified:

- For *Straight For Work* program staff, meeting the extensive and diverse workload was viewed as particularly challenging;
The dual role of the former program manager was initially problematic and confusing to staff;

There was reported difficulty integrating and delivering programs within a tightly structured correctional system (i.e., finding a ‘place’ among a multitude of programs) and working to change a ‘culture’ that doesn’t readily embrace external stakeholders (i.e. potential employers and service organisations);

Referrals to the program from staff at Dillwynia were recognised to be slow, in some cases inappropriate for various reasons, with delays in case plan information for participants from Dillwynia, and a need for better advance notice by Straight For Work program staff of upcoming group commencements;

There was a fairly large reported participant dropout from the program within 6 months of commencement;

Inmates were often relocated to other prisons/jails or other programs while engaged in the Straight For Work program resulting in drop-out;

The volunteer nature of the program resulted in low intake initially;

No consequence for non-attendance to classes by prisoner participants;

Interviewees reported persistent lack of esteem and self belief among program participants, with many also losing commitment to stay in the program voluntarily;

Problems arising from inadequate participant-mentor match;

Interviewees reported that participants can become more demanding and take advantage of mentors;

Mentors exiting the program due to a change in personal circumstances was also reported as a delivery problem;

Inability to recruit mentors, particularly male mentors, as volunteers within what was a unique prisoner support program;

Regression for the CDTCC participants, due to breach within the Centre Case Plan, resulting in the mentor program being terminated or curtailed temporarily;

Perceived ‘stigma’ experienced by prisoners in relation to having a mentor, often associated with a quite common inability to accept help, and conversely, that those with a mentor are advantaged in some way;

Upon release, individuals often returned to their former place of residence or community/neighbourhood and could not be located;

Upon release, individuals often returned to crime or resumed a pattern of drug/alcohol abuse or addiction;

Transition support was ‘costly’ in terms of time required by Straight For Work staff to support released prisoners in various crisis situations and the need to support individuals in accessing essential services;
- Duplication of services which results from 'participant sharing' when two providers are supporting an individual with the same service; and

- Reported difficulties in program reporting, record keeping, and data management in general. This may relate to the staff workload issue that is listed here (see above on this list).

Following analysis of program outcomes that is presented in the next chapter, these various elements of program integrity and delivery will be discussed further in the concluding chapter of the report.
Chapter 4: *Straight For Work*

**Program Outcomes Evaluation**

As previously stated, without evaluating performance in terms of outputs and outcomes in relation to targets, it is not possible to make judgements about a program's success. The outcomes evaluation examined program effectiveness in terms of employment and vocational training outcomes achieved and mentoring program outcomes. The outcomes evaluation examined outputs in relation to targets over the two years that the program operated in reference to program commencement, completion of training, case management (pre- and post-release plans), links to essential services, mentor recruitment and training, achievement of short and longer-term mentorships, achievement of durable employment, and program exits.

At the outset of the program, it was intended to include analysis of recidivism outcomes achieved over the two years of the program by assessing recidivism rates for ex-prisoner participants compared with recidivism rates for all ex-prisoners. This proved impossible, as the *Straight For Work* program data files do not include recidivism data. It was also not possible to get access to de-identified records from the Department, and ethics approval was not given to access Department records. Therefore, this component of evaluation was conducted on the basis of *Straight For Work* program records and data files. A combination of de-identified individual participant files and aggregated results pertaining to outcomes achieved in relation to each of several program objectives were provided to the research team.

### 4.1 The *Straight For Work* Participant Group

The *Straight For Work* program targeted prisoners who have a disability and are incarcerated at the CDTCC and Dillwynia Correctional Centre in New South Wales. The need for a manifold prisoner support program was identified during discussions between Corrective Services staff at the CDTCC and Dillwynia, and reflected feedback from inmates who considered that without appropriate support before and after release their chances of re-offending greatly increased. Prisoners with disabilities represent over 60 percent and of the Dillwynia and CDTCC population, approximately 30 percent are of indigenous origin. International and Australian literature indicates that ex-prisoners with such backgrounds often face multiple barriers to their reintegration into the community. Acknowledgement of multiple barriers to community reintegration for ex-prisoners in general is commented on in various reports and research papers and more recently by Australian Institute of Criminology in their report addressing interventions for prisoners returning to the community (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2005). A large body of research states that mental health issues are one of the most disabling conditions for offenders and prevalence of mental illness is increasing with more offenders seeking treatment for depression, anxiety and affective disorders (Butler & Allnutt, 2003).
The *Straight For Work* program providers inform that typically the program participants will have a mental illness, many have been victims of sexual and/or physical abuse and the majority has long histories of poly-drug misuse. Although this sub-group is participating in prison drug treatment programs, evidence indicates that without on-going assistance, a return to illicit drug use post-release is common (Graffam et al., 2004). Mental illness symptoms and its concomitant social stigma may further exacerbate the *Straight For Work* target participant's opportunities for community reintegration. The post-release direct supports and referral supports to be provided by the *Straight For Work* program seeks to assist the offender participants to successfully address those multiple issues. The *Straight For Work* program collaborators claim their program provides appropriate pre-release and post-release support to significantly reduce recidivism rates.

### 4.2 Outcome Data

Outcome data achieved in relation to each of several program objectives were provided to the research team by *Straight For Work*. The outcomes related to a range of program elements for Year 1 and Year 2 of the *Straight For Work* program. The data file contained outcome data relating to key program elements including:

**Pre-release commencement**
- Number achieved and target for participants accepted on the program at both Dillwynia and the CDTCC; and
- Total achieved and target for all participants accepted on the program.

**Pre-release participant training**
- Number achieved and target for participants completing training.

**Pre-release case management**
- Number achieved and target for participants with pre- and post-release plans completed.

**Post-release essential services**
- Number of participants obtained/maintained secure stable accommodation;
- Number of participants linked to drug and alcohol treatment and rehabilitation;
- Number of participants linked to education/training employment support; and
- Number of participants linked to appropriate medical support services.

**Mentoring**
- Number achieved and target for mentors recruited and trained;
- Number achieved and target for mentorships established;
- Number achieved and target for mentorships reaching 13 weeks; and
- Number achieved and target for mentorships reaching 26 weeks.
Employment outcomes

- Number of participants placed in employment;
- Number of participants achieving durable employment outcomes reaching 13 weeks; and
- Number of participants achieving durable employment outcomes reaching 26 weeks.

Exits

- Number of participants receiving a structured exit from the program.

In addition, aggregated results in terms of outcomes achieved in relation to each of several program objectives were provided to the research team by *Straight For Work*. The outcomes related to a range of program elements relating to pre-release commencement, pre-release participant training, plans completed, employment, and mentoring. Some personal data was also provided to the researchers including participant age, gender, education history, criminal justice history, history of drug and alcohol use, disability type, and work history.

4.3 Characteristics of Program Participants

Total number of program participants

The total number of participants accepted into the *Straight For Work* program was 29 in the one year period from July 2007 to June 2008. In the second financial year of the program, the number of participants was 30.

Gender distribution of program participants

Of the 29 participants who commenced the program in Year 1, 17 were male participants from the CDTCC and 12 were female participants from Dillwynia. In the second year, 20 were male participants from the CDTCC and 10 were female participants from Dillwynia.

Overall, the percentage of females in the program is somewhat higher than what is found in the criminal justice system (approximately 7% females vs 37% across the two years of this program). The higher percentage of females arises from the fact that Dillwynia is a female correctional facility, and the program was originally aimed at female prisoners with a disability.

Age distribution of program participants

Table 1 shows the age distribution of participants in the first two years of the program. In the first year, the average age of the *Straight For Work* program participants was 31.10 years (n = 29, SD = 6.96). Of the 29 program participants, eight were aged between 17-25 years of age, 13 were aged between 26-35 years of age, and eight were aged between 36-50 years of age. The average age of the CDTCC and Dillwynia participants in Year 1 was 30.12 years (SD = 6.78) and 32.5 years (SD = 6.98), respectively.
Table 1. Age distribution of program participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>CDTCC</th>
<th>Dillwynia</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>CDTCC</th>
<th>Dillwynia</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. %</td>
<td>No. %</td>
<td>No. %</td>
<td>No. %</td>
<td>No. %</td>
<td>No. %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17–25 years</td>
<td>6 35.3</td>
<td>2 16.6</td>
<td>8 27.6</td>
<td>6 30.0</td>
<td>3 30.0</td>
<td>9 30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26–35 years</td>
<td>8 47.1</td>
<td>5 41.7</td>
<td>13 44.8</td>
<td>7 35.0</td>
<td>6 60.0</td>
<td>13 43.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36–50 years</td>
<td>3 17.6</td>
<td>5 41.7</td>
<td>8 27.6</td>
<td>7 35.0</td>
<td>1 10.0</td>
<td>8 28.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17 100.0</td>
<td>12 100.0</td>
<td>29 100.0</td>
<td>20 100.0</td>
<td>10 100.0</td>
<td>30 100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the second year, the average age of the *Straight For Work* program participants was 30.7 years (n = 30, SD = 6.45). Of the 30 program participants, nine were aged between 17-25 years of age, 13 were aged between 26-35 years of age, and eight were aged between 36-50 years of age. The average age of the CDTCC and Dillwynia participants in Year 2 was 30.7 years (SD = 6.61) and 30.7 years (SD = 6.10), respectively.

**Disability Type**

A range of disability types was reported by program participants as indicated in Table 2. Across both years of the program, all program participants indicated that they had a disability, apart from one participant from Dillwynia in Year 2 who did not disclose their disability. Disability type included a wide range of chronic physical health and mental health conditions. As a relatively large proportion of the participants in the first and second year reported two or more current disabling conditions, the number of disabling conditions reported in the table is higher than the number of participants. Of the 29 *Straight For Work* program participants in the first year, seven had a diagnosis of depression, and there were three reports of anxiety, anger/mood stabilization, panic disorder, and suicide/self-harm. The distribution of disability types was similar for participants engaged in the second year, with 10 reports of depression. Moreover, approximately one-third of the sample reported an unspecified mental illness.
Table 2. Distribution of disability type for program participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability Type</th>
<th>YEAR ONE</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>YEAR TWO</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CDTCC Dillwynia</td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>CDTCC Dillwynia</td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger/Mood Stabilisation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panic disorder</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide/Self-Harm</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hepatitis C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Illness</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Illness (Not Specified)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Disability</td>
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<td>0.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality disorder</td>
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<td>0.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Imp/Blindness</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-social disorder</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 incorporates obsessive-compulsive disorder
2 incorporates stress disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder
3 Includes ADHD, ADD, schizophrenia
4 Incorporates psychological, emotional, and behavioural disorders (not specified)
5 Incorporates multiple personality disorder
6 Includes nerve damage (general), HIV

Educational history

Table 3 details participant educational histories. Of the total 29 Straight For Work participants who commenced the program in 2007-2008, 26 reported their highest level of education attained. Of these individuals, 14 had completed less than 10 years of formal schooling and an additional 10 had completed Year 10-Year 12 secondary schooling. Two participants indicated that they had higher than a Year 12 education. Of the 26 Year 1 participants who reported their level of education, the average highest level of education attained was Year 9 (SD = 1.43).

Of the 30 participants in the second year, 28 reported their highest level of education attained. Of these individuals, 12 had completed less than 10 years formal schooling and an additional 16 had a Year 10-Year 12 education. Unlike the first year intake, no participants in the second year had a University level education. Of the 28 participants in the second year who reported their level of education, the average highest level of education attained was Year 9 (SD = 1.52). Clearly, low education is a characteristic of Straight For Work participants in general.
Table 3. Levels of participant education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education History</th>
<th>YEAR ONE</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>YEAR TWO</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CDTCC</td>
<td>Dillwynia</td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>CDTCC</td>
<td>Dillwynia</td>
<td>Overall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. %</td>
<td>No. %</td>
<td>No. %</td>
<td>No. %</td>
<td>No. %</td>
<td>No. %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≤ Year 9</td>
<td>10 58.8</td>
<td>4 33.3</td>
<td>14 48.3</td>
<td>8 40.0</td>
<td>4 40.0</td>
<td>12 40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years 10 + 11</td>
<td>5 29.4</td>
<td>4 33.3</td>
<td>9 31.1</td>
<td>9 45.0</td>
<td>3 30.0</td>
<td>12 40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 12</td>
<td>0 0.0</td>
<td>1 6.3</td>
<td>1 3.4</td>
<td>3 15.0</td>
<td>1 10.0</td>
<td>4 13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Level</td>
<td>0 0.0</td>
<td>2 16.8</td>
<td>2 6.9</td>
<td>0 0.0</td>
<td>0 0.0</td>
<td>0 0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>2 11.8</td>
<td>1 8.3</td>
<td>3 10.3</td>
<td>0 0.0</td>
<td>2 20.0</td>
<td>2 6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17 100.0</td>
<td>12 100.0</td>
<td>29 100.0</td>
<td>20 100.0</td>
<td>10 100.0</td>
<td>30 100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Drug and alcohol history

As shown in Table 4, a large majority of program participants had a history of drug and/or alcohol dependency. Of the 29 program participants enrolled in Year 1, 27 (93%) had a history of drug and/or alcohol abuse. All of the 17 program participants from the CDTCC had a drug affected history, averaging 12.11 years of use (SD = 6.40). In Year 1, 10 of the 12 participants from Dillwynia had a drug affected history, averaging 9.5 years of use (SD = 7.8).

Of the 30 participants in Year 2, 28 (93%) had a history of drug and/or alcohol abuse. All of the 20 participants from the CDTCC had a drug affected history, averaging 12.56 years of use (SD = 6.3). In Year 2, 8 of the 10 program participants from Dillwynia had a drug affected history, averaging 10.42 years of use (SD = 4.98). Of the participants with a history of drug and/or alcohol abuse, many continued to receive counselling support for this personal problem while registered with Straight For Work.

Table 4. Participant histories of drug and alcohol abuse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>D &amp; A History</th>
<th>YEAR ONE</th>
<th>YEAR TWO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|                                                 | CDTCC                     | Dillwynia                 | Overall
|                                                 | No. %                     | No. %                     | No. %                     | No. %                     | No. %                     | No. %                     |
| History of drug and/or alcohol abuse            | 17 100.0                  | 10 83.3                   | 27 93.1                   | 20 100.0                  | 8 80.0                    | 28 93.3                   |
| No drug and/or alcohol history                  | 0 0.0                     | 2 16.7                    | 2 6.9                     | 0 0.0                     | 2 20.0                    | 2 6.7                     |
| Total                                           | 17 100.0                  | 12 100.0                  | 29 100.0                  | 20 100.0                  | 10 100.0                  | 30 100.0                  |

Criminal justice history

All participants in the Straight For Work program had a criminal justice history (by virtue of their referrals), with offences ranging from driving offences to burglary, drug possession, use, and dealing, and serious assault and armed robbery.

Table 5 lists the types of criminal offences recorded against program participants. Australian Standard Offence Classifications (ASOC) have been used in the table that follows. Given that all program participants reported at least two prior criminal offences, the frequency of offences is higher than the actual number of participants. It
is clear from the figures below that the criminal histories of participants coming into the program vary quite considerably.

Table 5. Frequency and percentage of participant criminal offences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criminal Offences</th>
<th>YEAR ONE</th>
<th>YEAR TWO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CDTCC</td>
<td>Dillwynia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft/Break &amp; Enter</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>34.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraud/Larceny</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving Offences</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault/Indecency/GBH</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery/ Armed Robbery</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools of Trade</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Possession &amp; Use</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auto Theft/Grand Theft</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property Damage/Arson</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sale, Supply, &amp; Trafficking of Drugs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-Prison Offences</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach Legal Obligations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>174</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Includes Fare evasion, Resisting Arrest, Take & Drive Conveyance, Accessory after the Fact
2 Includes theft with violence
3 Includes Weapon Possession
4 Includes Possession and Equipment for Making Drugs

With respect to those participants in the first year of the program, overall, there were 71 reports (33.8%) of theft-related crime, 24 reports of fraud-related crime (11.5%), and 17 reports (8.1%) of driving offences. For those participants in the second year of the program, the pattern was much the same. Overall, there were 105 reports (38.6%) of theft-related crime, 20 reports (7.4%) of fraud-related crimes, and 31 reports (11.4%) of driving offences.

Data was also provided relating to whether the current offence was the first offence. Of the 29 program participants in the first year, the current offence was the first for only one female from Dillwynia. In the first year, the average length of the current sentence was 34.29 months or approximately 3 years (SD = 21.43 months; range = 5 months to 76 months) for the 28 program participants who responded to this question. The accumulated months incarcerated prior to the current sentence was also reported. Of the 29 participants, the average number of months served prior to the current sentence was 53.97 months or approximately 4.5 years (SD = 47.47 months; range = 0 months to 152 months). This is an underestimate of the number of
accumulated months, given that the figures for several participants represented a minimum number of accumulated months rather than a precise figure.

Of the 30 participants in the second year, only four from Dillwynia indicated that this was their first offence and data was unknown for one additional female. In the second year, the average length of the current sentence was 44.65 months or approximately 3.5 years (SD = 22.53 months; range = 10 months to 104 months) for the 27 program participants for whom data was recorded. The accumulated months incarcerated prior to the current sentence was also reported. For participants in the second year, this data was unknown for two participants from Dillwynia and one from the CDTCC. Of the 27 participants for whom data was known, the average number of months served prior to the current sentence was 68.77 months or approximately 5.5 years (SD = 58.76 months; range = 0 months to 262 months). Like the data for the first year, this is an underestimate of the number of accumulated months given that precise figures were unavailable for several participants.

**Intervention treatments and programs**

Over the two-year period, the number and type of intervention treatments and programs was recorded. Given that all program participants reported involvement in several intervention treatments and programs, the frequencies are higher than the actual number of participants. As indicated in Table 6, a range of treatment interventions were undertaken by the participants. In the first year of the program, a large proportion of participants participated in drug and alcohol counselling and/or Narcotics Anonymous meetings. Life management programs were also a focus for the CDTCC and Dillwynia participants in Year 1. Moreover, all 17 CDTCC participants in Year 1 participated in the SMART recovery program, PEP program, and Pathways program, among others. For Dillwynia participants there was a focus on employment-related programs, domestic violence programs, anger management programs, as well as emotional regulation (e.g., Depression, anxiety, and stress program). For both participant groups, the pattern of participation was much the same in the second year.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention treatments and programs</th>
<th>YEAR ONE</th>
<th>YEAR TWO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CDTCC</td>
<td>Dillwynia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. %</td>
<td>No. %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambling Program&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2 1.4</td>
<td>2 2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Counselling</td>
<td>11 7.4</td>
<td>5 6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment/Business Skills Development</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>14 19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug &amp; Alcohol-related program&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>21 14.3</td>
<td>12 16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Program</td>
<td>1 0.7</td>
<td>4 5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Violence</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>4 5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>3 4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger Management&lt;sup&gt;3&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4 2.7</td>
<td>4 5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Management&lt;sup&gt;4&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>16 10.9</td>
<td>7 9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grief program</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>2 2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young offenders</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>1 1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Counselling</td>
<td>11 7.4</td>
<td>5 6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly case management</td>
<td>17 11.6</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMART recovery</td>
<td>17 11.6</td>
<td>3 4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPA program</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>1 1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s resource centre</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>2 2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillsong city care</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>1 1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEP</td>
<td>17 11.6</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathways</td>
<td>17 11.6</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think first program</td>
<td>3 2.0</td>
<td>1 1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice Health Treatment Plan</td>
<td>6 4.1</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community service</td>
<td>1 0.7</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections</td>
<td>1 0.7</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills program</td>
<td>1 0.7</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horizons</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>1 1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PstWest Clinic</td>
<td>1 0.7</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>147 100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>72 100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>1</sup> Includes counselling for gambling addiction

<sup>2</sup> Includes drug/alcohol counselling and NA meetings

<sup>3</sup> Includes alternative to violence, violent offender program, violence prevention

<sup>4</sup> Includes interpersonal communication, life skills, managing emotions

55
Accommodation Outcomes

As indicated in Table 7, for both years of the program, the majority of program participants were identified as living independently in the community. For those participants in the first year, just less than half of the CDTCC program participants were located at the CDTCC (for the most part identified at Stage 2, CDTCC), and approximately 8 percent of Dillwynia participants were either in custody, a rehabilitation centre, remained at Dillwynia, or unknown. In Year 2, apart from those living in the community, a large proportion of the participants were at either CDTCC or Dillwynia.

Table 7. Frequency and percentage of accommodation outcomes for program participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodation Outcomes</th>
<th>YEAR ONE</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>YEAR TWO</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CDTCC</td>
<td>Dillwynia</td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>CDTCC</td>
<td>Dillwynia</td>
<td>Overall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. %</td>
<td>No. %</td>
<td>No. %</td>
<td>No. %</td>
<td>No. %</td>
<td>No. %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living in community independently</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>66.8</td>
<td>58.7</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In custody</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehabilitation centre</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDTCC</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dillwynia</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COSP Bundaleer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*includes those in custody at transitional centre

Employment history and Employment Outcomes

As indicated in the table that follows, in the first year, less than half of the program participants from the CDTCC were identified as employed (n = 7), while all but one program participant from Dillwynia was unemployed (n = 6). In the second year, the majority of participants from both Dillwynia and the CDTCC were unemployed.

Table 8. Frequency and percentage of employment outcomes for program participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Outcomes</th>
<th>YEAR ONE</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>YEAR TWO</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CDTCC</td>
<td>Dillwynia</td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>CDTCC</td>
<td>Dillwynia</td>
<td>Overall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. %</td>
<td>No. %</td>
<td>No. %</td>
<td>No. %</td>
<td>No. %</td>
<td>No. %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incarcerated</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>83.4</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>85.0</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>76.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The employment history of program participants was also identified in terms of the accumulated number of months previously employed. In the first year, the CDTCC participants had been previously employed an average of 50.83 months or approximately 4 years (SD = 97.0 months, range = 0 to 360 months). In contrast, Dillwynia participants had been previously employed an average of 102.25 months or approximately 8.5 years (SD = 81.52 months, range = 2 to 264 months). In the second year, the CDTCC participants had been previously employed an average of 41.28 months or approximately 3.4 years (SD = 58.50 months, range = 0 to 240 months). In contrast, Dillwynia participants had been previously employed an average of 39.72 months or approximately 3.2 years (SD = 51.85 months, range = 0 to 168 months).

**Current Status in Program (as at 30/6/08 and 30/6/09)**

The table that follows shows the frequency and percentage of active and exited participants at the end of each of the two financial years under consideration. The target was 25 supported participants in each year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current status</th>
<th>YEAR ONE</th>
<th>YEAR TWO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CDTCC</td>
<td>Dillwynia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. %</td>
<td>No. %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>90.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exited</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>76.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As at 30/6/08, four of the 17 participants from the CDTCC remained active in the program and 13 exited the program. Likewise, eight of the program participants from Dillwynia had exited the program in the first year and four remained active. In the second year, the majority of the CDTCC participants (90%) remained active in the program, while half of those participants from Dillwynia remained actively engaged.

Those CDTCC participants who exited the program over the two years of the program did so for a number of reasons including not being engaged in the program/lack of commitment, not getting anything out of the mentoring agreement, unable to find a male mentoree, moved to mainstream jail, and escaped from custody. Those Dillwynia participants who exited the program over the two years did so for a number of reasons including no longer wanting to participate, non-contactable after release, not being engaged in the program, did not complete training, and returned to custody.

**Summary of the Straight For Work participant profile**

In short, the Straight For Work participants have tended to be male, in early to middle adulthood, with a history of drug and alcohol dependency, and criminal histories involving a range of quite serious offences. They have also participated in a wide range of intervention treatments and programs, and typically show a history of under-employment. They are most definitely participants with very high level and comprehensive support needs. The profile of Straight For Work participants is highly...
consistent with what is suggested about offender characteristics in the research literature. It is also consistent with the original brief for the program to work with prisoners with a disability. There has been somewhat of a focus on female prisoners with a disability, with over one-third of participants being female. To this extent, the program has adhered to its original intention, its logic, and its design.

4.4 Key Performance Indicators

Pre-Release Management

There were three measures relating to pre-release management: (1) the number of participants accepted on the program (or number of commencements), (2) the number of participants who completed training, and (3) the number of participants who completed pre- and post-release plans. As detailed earlier, 29 participants were placed in the Straight For Work program in the first year of its operation: 12 participants originated from Dillwynia and 17 originated from the CDTCC. Of the 30 participants in the second year of the program, 10 were from Dillwynia and 20 were from the CDTCC.

Table 10 shows the number of commencements as a proportion of the annual commencement target for both prison locations. For the first year, the annual commencement target for participants originating from Dillwynia and CDTCC was 12 and 16, respectively. As shown in the table, in the first year, the program achieved 100 percent of its commencement target for Dillywnia-based participants and exceeded the commencement target at 106 percent for CDTCC-based participants. The combined total of commencements for the prison-located participants (n = 29) was equivalent to 103 percent of the commencement target. In other words, in the first year, the program exceeded its target (by one individual) with respect to the annual number of commencements.

For the second year, the annual commencement target for participants originating from Dillwynia and CDTCC was 12 and 13, respectively. As shown in Table 10, in the second year the program achieved 83 percent of its commencement target for Dillywnia-based participants and exceeded the commencement target at 154 percent for CDTCC-based participants. The combined total of commencements for the prison-located participants (n = 30) was equivalent to 120 percent of the commencement target. In other words, in the second year, the program exceeded its target (by five individuals) with respect to the annual number of commencements.
Table 10. Proportions relevant to program delivery for prison located participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Delivery</th>
<th>YEAR ONE</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>YEAR TWO</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CDTCC</td>
<td>Dillwynia</td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>CDTCC</td>
<td>Dillwynia</td>
<td>Overall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commencements/Annual Commencement Target</td>
<td>58.6% (17)</td>
<td>41.4% (12)</td>
<td>116% (29/25)</td>
<td>66.7% (20)</td>
<td>33.3% (10)</td>
<td>120% (30/25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion of Training/Annual Training Target</td>
<td>70.8% (17)</td>
<td>29.2% (7)</td>
<td>82.8% (24/29)</td>
<td>62.1% (18)</td>
<td>37.9% (11)*</td>
<td>96.7% (29/30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plans completed/Annual Target for Plan Completion</td>
<td>58.6% (17)</td>
<td>41.4% (12)</td>
<td>100% (29/29)</td>
<td>66.7% (20)</td>
<td>33.3% (10)</td>
<td>100% (30/30)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Note: one person commenced in Year 1, but completed training in Year 2.

For the remaining two variables, overall data only was provided. Table 10 shows the number of participants commencing the program each year and the number who completed training as a proportion of the target for completion of training. For both years of the program, the stated target was 85 percent of participants commencing the program to complete training. Overall, 24 participants completed training in the first year, which means that the program achieved 82.8 percent of its annual training target. In the second year, 29 participants completed training which is equivalent to 96.7 percent of the target.

The table also shows the number of participants who completed a pre- and post-release plan as a proportion of the annual target for plan completion, with the stated target of 100 percent of commencements. In the first year, the program achieved 100 percent of its target for plan completion. In the second year, the program exceeded the stated target at 120 percent.

Post-Release Management

Several post-release measures were identified including: (1) the number of participants who obtained/maintained secure and stable accommodation, (2) number of participants linked to drug/alcohol treatment and rehabilitation, (3) number of participants linked to education/training and employment support, and number of participants linked to appropriate medical support services. For these variables, totals were provided (i.e., Dillwynia and CDTCC participants combined) for the first and second year, and no annual targets were identified.
Table 11. Outcomes related to essential services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential Services</th>
<th>YEAR ONE percent of commencements</th>
<th>YEAR TWO percent of commencements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obtained/Maintained Secure, Stable Accommodation</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linked to Drug/Alcohol Treatment and Rehabilitation</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linked to Education/Training, Employment Support</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linked to Medical Support</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated in the table above, across both years, 100 percent of commencements obtained appropriate accommodation and drug/alcohol support. For both years, 85 percent of commencements were linked to education/training and/or received employment support, while 95 percent of commencements were linked to appropriate medical support.

Pre-Release and Post-Release Mentoring

There were six measures relevant to pre- and post-release mentoring: (1) the number of mentors recruited and trained, (2) the number of mentorships established, (3) Year 1 participants continuing new mentorships established in Year 2, (4) the number of mentorships lasting less than 13 weeks, (5) the number of mentorships reaching 13 weeks, and (6) the number of mentorships reaching 26 weeks.

Table 12 shows each of the six measures as a proportion of the annual targets (where provided) relevant to each variable. As indicated in the table, 25 mentors were recruited and trained in Year 1 and 19 were recruited and trained in Year 2, with the budgeted target being 30 for both years. In this context, Straight For Work achieved 83 percent of its target in Year 1 and 63 percent of its target in Year 2. A relatively large proportion of mentorships were established in the first year; however, the outcome was relatively low in Year 2, with 8 mentorships established, which was equivalent to 38 percent of the target of 21. Few mentorships reached 13 and 26 weeks.
Table 12. Proportions relevant to mentoring for prison located participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentoring Outcomes</th>
<th>YEAR ONE</th>
<th>YEAR TWO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>% of target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentors recruited and trained</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>83% (25/30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentorships established</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>83% (15/18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 1 participants continuing NEW mentorships established in YR 2</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentorships lasting &lt;13 weeks</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentorships reaching 13 weeks</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20% (3/15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentorships reaching 26 weeks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7% (1/14)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) Year 2 participants NEW mentorships established
\(^2\) Year 2 participants NEW mentorships established lasting < 13 weeks
\(^3\) Year 1 participants NEW mentorships established lasting < 13 weeks
\(^4\) Year 2 participants NEW mentorships established reaching 13 weeks
\(^5\) Year 1 participants continuing mentorships established reaching 13 weeks

Employment Outcomes

There were four measures relevant to employment outcomes: (1) the number of placed Straight For Work participants, (2) the number of participants who had employment outcomes of less than 13 weeks, (3) the number of participants who achieved durable employment outcomes (reaching 13 weeks), and (4) the number of participants who achieved durable employment outcomes (reaching 26 weeks).

Table 13 shows each of these measures. As indicated in the table, in the first year, 12 of the 29 commencing participants were placed into employment which is equivalent to 41 percent rate of employment placement. This is below the stated measure of 50 percent of engaged participants. In terms of sustained employment, 8 participants achieved employment outcomes of 13 weeks in the first year compared to 3 'new' Year 2 participants in the second year. A similar outcome was achieved in relation to employment outcomes reaching 26 weeks. These figures were below the stated target of 50 percent of engaged participants.

Table 13. Outcomes related to employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Outcomes</th>
<th>YEAR ONE</th>
<th>YEAR TWO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>% of Target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants placed into Employment</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>41 (12/29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment outcomes &lt; 13 weeks</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ns(^1) (4(^2))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment outcomes of 13 weeks</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3(^1) (6(^2))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Outcomes of ≥26 weeks</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2(^1) (4(^2))</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) New Year 2 participants placed ≥1 July 2008
\(^2\) Continuing Year 1 participants
Ns = not supplied
Placement History

The data relating to placement history is contradictory to that above, indicating some errors in the data file provided (either in relating to employment outcomes or placement history). There were 59 participants over the two years of the program of which 43 (73%) were placed into employment and 16 (27%) were not placed into employment. Of the 43 participants, 20 received a placement in Year 1 and 23 received a placement in Year 2. There were a range of job types including labourer (n = 15), labourer/kitchen hand (n = 5), car detailing/tyre fitting (n = 9), landscaping/mowing (n = 3), picker/packer/process work (n = 4), bricklayer/painter/timber miller (n = 4), and traffic management (n = 3). The average number of hours worked per week by the 43 participants who were placed into employment was 30.16 (sd = 11.69, range 8 to 40) and the average number of weeks worked was 10.84 (sd = 18.40, range 0.1 to 84). In summary, the majority of participants had been placed into employment over the two years of the program, with the typical participant working full-time in a labouring-type position for an average of 11 weeks.

Structured Exits

Three mentors received a structured exit from the program in the first year. No participants received a structured exit in the same time period. In the second year, 13 new 2008-2009 participants received a structured exit from the program. No data were provided on the number of structured exits in Year 2 for continuing participants. In the same time period, 20 Year 1 mentors and one Year 2 mentor received a structured exit from the program.

4.5 Summary of program outcomes evaluation

The key performance indicator data was provided in the form of excel files. For the most part, the data was clearly presented; however, the data in relation to mentoring, employment, and placement outcomes was somewhat confusing and difficult to interpret. As well, there appears to be some inconsistencies in the data with respect to the employment and placement outcome data.

In terms of pre-release management, overall, annual commencements exceeded the annual commencement target for both years. Completion of training achieved 96 percent of the annual training target in the first year, but fell short in the second year (at 48%). In terms of the number of plans completed, the program met (Year 1) and exceeded (Year 2) targets. In relation to program delivery, therefore, the results were very good. With respect to post-release management, virtually all participants were reported to be linked to essential services, which once again, is a very positive outcome of the program.

In terms of mentoring outcomes, the number of mentors recruited and trained was high in the first year (achieving 83% of the target), but declined in the second year (achieving 63% of the target). This pattern was also observed in relation to mentorships established, achieving 83 percent and 38 percent of the target in each year respectively. Durable mentorships were very low in both years, but particularly so for the second year of the program.
In terms of employment outcomes, the number of participants placed into employment was below the expected target for both years (at 41% and 73%, respectively). Durable employment outcomes were also relatively low over the two years of the program.
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

The evaluation of the Straight For Work program has been comprehensive. As described earlier in this report, evaluation of program logic and design, program integrity, and program effectiveness are the three essential elements of all quality program evaluation. These three elements are intrinsically related to each other. A program which does not have sound logic and design is not likely to succeed because of the mismatch between the ideal (concept and design) and the reality of the program. Moreover, without knowledge of the extent to which program delivery has adhered to program principles and design, it is impossible to know whether differences between objectives and targets on one hand, and performance on the other, have resulted from 'faulty' logic and/or design or from 'faulty' follow through in the delivery processes. In addition, it is not possible to make judgments about program success unless program performance has been fully evaluated in terms of outputs and outcomes in relation to targets.

In this chapter, we discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the Straight For Work program in terms of its program logic and design, program integrity, and program effectiveness. The discussion and conclusion is in terms of the program's stated objectives, its overall performance and performance in relation to specific objectives, and challenges to program integrity and effectiveness. The report concludes with a set of recommendations for further development of employment and vocational support programs for prisoners.

As stated earlier in this report, the Straight For Work program operated for two years from July of 2007 through June of 2009. Typically following analysis and discussion, recommendations refer to program expansion, improvement, and further development. Because the program has ended, the presentation of recommendations is more general and aimed at vocational training, employment, and transition support programs for prisoners on the whole.

5.1 How the Program Logic and Design reflects current research and good practice models

There are several key elements in program logic and design that are needed to effectively reduce re-offending and promote reintegration in the community (see National Community Crime Prevention, 2005; Solomon et al., 2004). Best practice is evident when the program is structured to offer comprehensive supports across multiple service domains, mainly training, employment, accommodation, drug and alcohol treatment, health care and social supports (National Community Crime Prevention, 2005; Ogilvie, 2001; Ward, 2001). Throughcare should be a feature of a pre- and post-release model, ensuring a seamless support from prison to the community with the provision of intensive support to newly released prisoners immediately upon release (Maruna, Immarigeon, & LeBel, 2004; National Community...
Crime Prevention, 2005; Ward, 2001). It is also ideal for programs to be based on a case management model, address multiple needs using a variety of techniques including cognitive-behavioural techniques, strengthen community capacity, allow for participant personal empowerment, offer mentoring, provide interagency collaboration, offer support for a sufficient duration, and have a comprehensive evaluation integrated into the program (Graffam, Shinkfield, Lavelle, & McPherson, 2002; National Community Crime Prevention, 2005; Ogilvie, 2001; Ward, 2001). The Straight For Work program content and delivery aimed to reflect international best practice in prisoner pre-release preparation programs.

As stated earlier, initially the primary objective of the Straight For Work program was reduced recidivism through life skills and vocational training, employment and mentoring. Due to difficulties getting accurate information on criminal activity, it was not possible to measure re-offending. Nevertheless, reduced re-offending remained an objective of the program (though not measurable). Following the shift, the program focused on life skills and vocational training, employment and mentoring objectives. Secondary emphasis was on raising self-awareness, self-esteem, and economic and community involvement. These are elements that are considered essential to successful transitional support. There were several best practice elements evident in the program’s logic and design which are based on the extant research:

Case management approach
Case management is an effective approach to service delivery if participants have complex, multiple needs. Case management enables whole-person integration through the coordination of multiple services, supports, and programs. Straight For Work was delivered through a case management model. Specialist staff formed the central point of contact for participants. In this approach, individually tailored assistance was provided from custody to community, and multiple services, supports and programs were coordinated from the point of participant engagement (including in-take and assessment) through to exiting the program.

Address multiple needs through a variety of techniques
Multiple needs were addressed in the program’s service model, by way of group and individual training, counselling (incorporating cognitive-behavioural techniques), mentoring, intensive customised case management, and advocacy. These approaches were designed into the model in order to address offending behaviours and to promote success in community reintegration.

Strengthening community capacity
In order to strengthen community capacity, the program included partnerships and contributions from volunteer community mentors, employers from diverse industries, local and federal government, service including the reference group members, individual participants and academia. All of these groups were intended to work together to develop the Straight For Work program, as well as work toward educating and encouraging community participation to strengthen community capacity.
Participant personal empowerment

In order to encourage personal empowerment among participants, the program included an assessment of individual needs and an individually tailored pre- and post-release plan. This was intended to allow participants to achieve their identified goals across multiple criminogenic needs.

Mentoring

A key feature of the program was the mentoring component. Volunteer mentors were considered important in bringing together the whole program experience for the participant. Straight For Work mentoring also provided a context in which to support the development of the participants’ social skills. Successful mentoring relationships can be used to positively influence community perception of the capacity of prisoners to make positive lifestyle changes. Additional best practice elements of mentoring programs identified as effective at reducing re-offending and promoting lifestyle change have been found to have: a thorough screening process; a structured training program equipping mentors with key strategies; and on-going supervision and support. These were features of the Straight For Work mentoring program.

Evidence of interagency collaboration

Interagency collaboration is evidenced by the established links between the Straight For Work program and multiple service agencies, and in the development of referral and service protocols to ensure a continuity of support to participants as they engaged in other services.

Cognitive-behavioural techniques

All service aspects of the program incorporated techniques of cognitive-behavioural theory. There was a focus on cognitive aspects such as helping participants to identify the thinking that causes negative feelings and behaviours and assisting them to develop positive resourceful thoughts which lead to being motivated. The designated staff member delivering the service has extensive experience and is qualified in cognitive-behavioural techniques.

Sufficient duration

Another characteristic of effective transition support is that the program should be of sufficient duration to influence behaviours. The individual participant Straight For Work program is of 12 months duration. At three months prior to release, essential service referrals are provided, after which delivery of continuous supports for participants are provided for an additional nine months post-release. This program length is substantial by comparison with transition support programs reported in the international literature.

Comprehensive evaluation integrated into the program

As part of a continuous quality improvement framework within the program, there was an internal action research component of program design as well as on-going program monitoring. Participant progress was to be recorded in relation to all program objectives. This process formed part of the strategy of continuous project monitoring and improvement and the achievement of projected outcomes and performance indicators.
The *Straight For Work* program was designed to deliver appropriate pre and post-release transition support to significantly reduce recidivism rates. The program’s logic and design were based on extant research with internal processes to ensure quality control and continuous quality improvement. Additionally, there was a plan for continuous external evaluation by the Deakin University team. This did not prove possible due to prolonged delay in ethics approval from the Department of Corrective Services. Nevertheless, program design did account well for the monitoring function.

Even though *Straight For Work* program logic and design were quite sound, there are some features of program logic and design that appear somewhat problematic in their own right. Two of those relate to the program’s target group and one related to the staffing model.

One apparent design weakness was the focus on disability as a primary condition. Disability was, originally, the primary condition of eligibility for the *Straight For Work* program. Although various forms of disability are prevalent among prisoners, disability does not appear to be, and may not be, the most prominent condition of co-morbidity affecting the process of reintegration of prisoners. Although specifically disability-related issues may further complicate already very complex situations and conditions, housing, drug and alcohol treatment, and financial stability and security appear to be paramount issues for a very high proportion of released prisoners.

A second apparent design weakness is in the prominent focus on employment for women prisoners. Women, at least in a majority of cases, may not be primarily oriented toward vocational training and/or employment upon release, instead focusing on reunification with family and children. For women, employment may be a priority later in the transition process. By designing the program to draw participants from Dillwynia, the program model clearly placed major emphasis on employment for women prisoners. As it turned out, women prisoners comprised 37 percent of the participant sample over the two years of the program. The program data file provided to the evaluation team did not specify location or gender of program participants placed into employment, so it is not possible to identify level of uptake of the employment component by females, however.

One apparent design weakness pertains to the staffing model that was employed within the program. The degree of multi-skilling and multi-tasking required to perform in their role was described as problematic by some of the interviewees. Several of the identified challenges to program integrity and program performance that have been discussed may well be related to staff having a ‘span of work’ that was too broad. Providing a range of supports to participants, supporting mentors, maintaining accurate and up to date files, developing and maintaining active links with referral services, and maintaining the necessary positive, active working relationship with DCS staff appears quite demanding in terms of quantity of work. Working within a context that is quite constrained and inflexible (as is the prison system, necessarily) and with a participant group with multiple, complex, dynamic support needs would be quite challenging in terms of the ‘quality of work’ dimension. An observation one can make based on extant literature is that the cost of delivery of transition programs for prisoners is often under estimated due to the support needs of the target group. Although an apparent design weakness the *Straight For Work* program staffing model was similar to others existent in Australia and described in the literature.
5.2 Program Integrity

One of the main principles of best practice in prisoner/offender rehabilitation generally is program integrity (Gendreau et al., 1996). Program integrity is maintained when a program is delivered according to the theory and design that underpins it. Andrews and Dowden (2005) argued that the maintenance of program integrity is achieved through well trained staff who understand the theory and logic behind the program, the degree of clinical supervision that is available, and the existence of protocols to monitor program delivery.

Andrews and Dowden (2005) have proposed the following 10 factors as measures or indicators of program integrity:

1. Specific model: The program is based on a specific model or theory of criminal behaviour.
2. Selection of workers: The program is delivered by people who possess interpersonal influencing skills, such as enthusiasm, interest, understanding, and caring.
3. Trained workers: The program is delivered by people who have received specific training in the content, design, and delivery style of the program.
4. Clinical supervision of workers: Supervision is provided by a clinician who has been trained to deliver the program. The supervising clinician should also have a strong understanding of the theory of the program, both in terms of content and design.
5. Training manuals: Training manuals clearly specify the desired practice for program delivery.
6. Monitoring of service process and/or intermediate gain: Structured approaches are set in place to assess service as it is actually delivered or treatment gains as they are actually achieved.
7. Adequate ‘dosage’: The program is delivered at an acceptable dosage, given the risk level of the individuals for whom the program is targeted.
8. Freshness of the program: Whether the program has processes in place to maintain vitality and enthusiasm.
9. Small group sizes: The number of participants in each group is small enough to ensure that each participant can receive adequate attention.
10. Involved evaluator: The program evaluator was involved in the design, delivery or supervision of the program. (Note: This point has been debated. It is necessary that the evaluator maintain sufficient objectivity. There is inherent tension between being engaged and remaining objective.)

A meta-analysis conducted by Andrews and Dowden (2005) highlighted the importance of program integrity. This study involved a review of 273 evaluations of rehabilitation programs and an analysis of the impact of program integrity factors on recidivism rates. Results suggested that clinically appropriate programs that adhered to at least eight of the program integrity factors listed demonstrated lower recidivism rates than clinically inappropriate programs. Clinically appropriate programs were
defined as those that complied with principles of risk, need, and responsivity. Those programs that were viewed as clinically inappropriate were not impacted by program integrity factors. The authors concluded that maintaining program integrity would only have an impact if the program also adhered to the principles of risk, need and responsivity.

Using these 10 factors as a basis for judging program integrity that were identified by Andrews and Dowden (2005), the Straight For Work program can be judged to have a high level of program integrity. Table 14 provides an overview of the integrity factors that the Straight For Work program demonstrates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Integrity Factor</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Straight For Work Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specific model</td>
<td>The program is based on a specific model or theory of criminal behaviour.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of workers</td>
<td>‘Facilitators’ possess interpersonal influencing skills such as, enthusiasm, interest, understanding, and caring.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trained workers</td>
<td>‘Facilitators’ receive specific training to deliver the program</td>
<td>Yes/No (Trainers do / CMs not specific)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical supervision of workers</td>
<td>‘Facilitators’ receive supervision from a clinician who has been trained to deliver the program. The supervising clinician should also have a strong understanding of the theory of the program, both in terms of content and design.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training manuals</td>
<td>Training manuals clearly specify the desired practice for program delivery.</td>
<td>Yes/No (Trainers / CMs not possible)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring of service process and/or intermediate gain</td>
<td>Structured approaches are put in place to assess service as it is actually delivered, or treatment gains actually achieved.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate dosage</td>
<td>The program is delivered at an acceptable dosage, given the risk level of the individuals for whom the program is targeted.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New/fresh program</td>
<td>Whether the program has processes in place to maintain vitality and enthusiasm.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small group sizes</td>
<td>The number of participants in each group is small enough to ensure that each participant can receive adequate attention.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved evaluator</td>
<td>The program evaluator was also involved in the design, delivery, or supervision of the program.</td>
<td>No (Advice at start up only)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Professional discretion is an additional factor related to program integrity. The principle of professional discretion dictates that there should be sufficient flexibility within a program design to allow clinical judgement to complement or override program integrity (Ward, Melser, & Yates, 2007). It is often difficult to achieve an acceptable balance between maintaining program integrity and allowing for
professional discretion, given that there is the potential for programs to become either too restrictive and rigid, or too flexible and unstructured.

On a more specific process level of analysis, several challenges to program integrity have been identified in this evaluation. Although one can say that program integrity has been maintained, these several challenges suggest a number of ways that the service model could be modified and a number of ways that implementation could be improved.

Challenges to Program Integrity
In Chapter 3 of this report, several challenges to program integrity and delivery were identified. Some of those challenges referred to issues internal to the Straight For Work program, and some referred to broader system issues. Here we discuss each of those issues and how they may be resolved for future employment and vocational support programs for prisoners.

With respect to the integrity of program delivery, several challenges have been identified. Those challenges related to: program management and delivery issues; issues pertaining to partner providers including DCS; participant issues; and mentoring program issues.

Program management and delivery issues
- For Straight For Work program staff, meeting the extensive and diverse workload was viewed as particularly challenging – As previous suggested, the ‘span of work’ may have been too great for staff. Providing supports to participants, supporting mentors, maintaining accurate and up to date files, developing and maintaining active links with referral services, and maintaining the necessary positive, active working relationship with DCS staff appears quite demanding, particularly when working within a context that is quite constrained and inflexible and with a participant group with multiple, complex, dynamic support needs. The human resource cost of delivery of transition programs for prisoners is high and often under estimated. Creating active collaborations and linkages among service providers is essential.

- Reported difficulties in record keeping, program reporting, and data management in general - This may relate to the staff workload issue that is discussed above. Of course, accurate and up to date record keeping and data management actually contribute to overall program delivery efficiency, and compromising this activity as a result of other work demands can exacerbate workload demands.

- Transition support was ‘costly’ in terms of time required by Straight For Work staff to support released prisoners in various crisis situations and the need to support individuals in accessing essential services – Although this is a direct reference to staff workload, the solution to this would have been improved service linkages with partner providers. This is discussed more fully below.

Issues pertaining to partner providers
- There was reported difficulty integrating and delivering programs within a tightly structured correctional system (i.e., finding a ‘place’ among a multitude of programs) and working to change a ‘culture’ that doesn’t readily embrace
external stakeholders (i.e. potential employers and service organisations) – Negotiation and agreement of the ‘place’ for *Straight For Work* among the various relevant service providers prior to commencement of the program, with formally agreed procedures and regular review of processes in action would assist.

- Referrals to the program from staff at Dillwynia were recognised to be slow, in some cases inappropriate for various reasons, with delays in case plan information for participants from Dillwynia, and a need for better advance notice by *Straight For Work* program staff of upcoming group commencements – There are three issues here. One relates to ‘program readiness’ and one relates to participant-program ‘fit’. Improved information and/or improved assessment of suitability could assist resolve this. Improved information exchange with relevant Dillwynia staff regarding program participants would also assist. Closer collaboration across service providers is the basic issue.

- Inmates were often relocated to other prisons/jails or other programs while engaged in the *Straight For Work* program resulting in drop-out – Access to basic information relevant to participants in the program would make this issue more manageable. Having information on an individual’s sentence plan, earliest release date (ERD), maximum release dated (MRD), specific sentence conditions, etc. would reduce the level of unexpected transfers and releases.

- Regression for the CDTCC participants, due to breach within the Centre Case Plan, resulting in the mentor program being terminated or curtailed temporarily – Although there may not be a way of managing this issue, apart from treating a certain degree of regression and mentor program termination as expected disruption, ensuring timely communication with CDTCC staff can minimise the impact.

- Duplication of services which results from ‘participant sharing’ when two providers are supporting an individual with the same service – Strengthening the linkages between providers can assist resolving this issue, as it can with a number of other issues identified.

**Participant issues**

- There was a fairly large reported participant dropout from the program within 6 months of commencement. The volunteer nature of the program resulted in low intake initially – It is fairly common for programs to experience these issues in the first years of operation. Once well established, ‘word of mouth’ raises both awareness and interest in effective programs. With more knowledge and interest at commencement, adherence and completion rates improve. Provision of more information prior to commencement may also assist, but reputation over time is the most effective means of addressing this issue.

- Interviewees reported persistent lack of esteem and self belief among program participants, with many also losing commitment to stay in the program voluntarily – This issue is one requiring attention to participant
selection and ‘fit’ with program objectives and participant ‘readiness’, as well as provision of psychosocial / counseling supports to participants.

- Perceived ‘stigma’ experienced by prisoners in relation to having a mentor, often associated with a quite common inability to accept help, and conversely, that those with a mentor are advantaged in some way - This is also an issue requiring attention to participant selection and ‘fit’ with program objectives, participant ‘readiness’, and provision of psychosocial / counseling supports.

- Upon release, individuals often returned to their former place of residence or community/neighbourhood and could not be located. Upon release, individuals often returned to crime or resumed a pattern of drug/alcohol abuse or addiction - Although these are direct references to participant behavior upon release, the solution to these issues are most likely through improved service linkages with partner providers. The need for seamless through care is well established. Effective working relationships and service linkages are necessary to achieve even an approximation of seamless through care.

Mentoring program issues

- Problems arising from inadequate participant-mentor match – This issue was clearly the result of having a small pool of prospective male mentors rather than poor mentor selection, induction, or training. Prior scoping of a prospective pool and greater analysis of the logistics of matching by location may have alerted the program manager to this issue.

- Interviewees reported that participants can become more demanding and take advantage of mentors – To the extent that this was a problem, enhanced preparation and training of mentors may assist. Program providers should remain cognisant of this issue as a potential deterrent to mentors.

- Mentors exiting the program due to a change in personal circumstances was also reported as a delivery problem – On the surface, it would appear that this is an issue beyond program provider control. However, having a small pool of prospective mentors from which to draw may well have made this a larger problem than it might have otherwise been.

- Inability to recruit mentors, particularly male mentors, as volunteers within what was a unique prisoner support program – Having been very successful in recruiting mentors into similar programs in Victoria, this may have been the result of having less well developed networks through which to market the mentoring program or less effective advertising. A lesson is that an abundant pool of willing prospective mentors is needed in order to complete the necessary selection and matching exercises that narrow the pool substantially before appropriate and enduring participant-mentor matches can be made.

Although all of these issues and the observations and advice provided in relation to them pertain to the Straight For Work program, the challenges that have been identified are highly typical of those faced by transition support programs for prisoners described in the literature. The observations and advice provided, therefore, can be considered as of general relevance to providers working in this
area and to government and policy makers funding or planning transition support programs of this type.

5.3 Program Effectiveness

Program effectiveness was measured in terms of program objectives and performance targets that were set in relation to those objectives. Chapter 4 presented an analysis of program effectiveness. The most reasonable way of assessing program effectiveness is in terms of the objectives and targets set in the original program description. A summary is as follows.

Objective 1 - To engage 25 participants per year for two years with 85% of participants at each yearly intake completing the Straight For Work program within three months from commencement of the program.

Performance indicators for Objective 1 included:
- 30 prisoners enrol in training who have undergone orientation session;
- 50 hours of training and assessment is delivered by WISE to participants;
- 28 participants complete 50-hour training program and receive certificate of achievement.

With respect to the performance indicators for this objective, 29 participants commenced the program in the first year, and 30 participants commenced the program in the second year. Twenty three participants completed training in the first year, and 12 completed training in the second year. This means that 79 percent of participants completed the program in the first year and 40 percent completed the program in the second year. Expected outcomes related to Objective 1 included increases in social and vocational skills for participants, social engagement by participants and general life coping skills for participants. Presented originally as expectations, no measurable indicators were built into performance measurement by the program manager.

Objective 2 - Each year, for two years 24 volunteer mentors recruited, selected, trained and ready for pairing to mentoree six months from program commencement.

Performance indicators for Objective 2:
- 25 suitably screened, police checked and trained volunteer mentors per year;
- 22 mentors engaged to participants within nine months of program commencement for each year.

With respect to the performance indicators for this objective, in the first year 25 mentors were recruited and trained, while in the second year 19 mentors were recruited and trained. Fifteen mentorships were established in the first year and 8 were established in the second year. Expected outcomes related to Objective 2 included: broader understanding of the life of disadvantaged people in the community; rapid development of mentoring skills which are applied in the workplace,
with family and other significant relationships; and a tested and proven training program for mentors that can be adapted for other participant groups. Presented originally as expectations, no measurable indicators were built into performance measurement, however, by observation, these objectives can be said to have been met, although not in a measurable way.

**Objective 3 - 85% of trained participants successfully engaged in mentoring at either pre- or post-release stage and maintain mentorships for six months or more with 85% of established mentorships having minimum fortnightly contact over the first three-months of their mentorship.**

Performance indicators for Objective 3:
- 25 participants per year complete the Skills For Life training course in preparation for mentoring;
- 22 participants per year linked to trained and suitably screened volunteer mentors;
- 22 mentorship agreements completed (signed) by mentor and mentoree per year;
- 85% of established mentorships have minimum fortnightly contact over a period of three months.

With respect to the performance indicators for this objective, as indicated above, 15 mentorships were established in the first year and 8 were established in the second year. Mentorships were described as reaching either 13 weeks or 26 weeks. Three mentorships reached 13 weeks in the first year and 2 reached 13 weeks in the second year. One mentorship was maintained for 26 weeks in the first year; no mentorships reached 26 weeks in the second year. This is clearly well below the stated objective of 85% of trained participants engaged in mentoring and maintaining mentorships for six months or more.

There were several expected outcomes related to Objective 3 including: increase in community participation; reduction in drug-taking behaviour; mentors attend all scheduled mentorship meetings; reduction in re-offence rates; increased self-esteem and a sense of belonging for participants; improved life skills, improved health, and improved family relationships for participants; improved job search networks, social networks, and achievement of social and vocational goals for participants; raised community awareness about offenders; and reduced crime and reduced community trauma. Presented originally as expectations, a few did include targets, but not measurable indicators of whether targets were achieved because of the subjective nature of the stated objectives. It would be very difficult to judge achievement of the objectives by observation alone.

**Objective 4 - 95% of prisoners engaged remain in program after release, with 100% of these participants engaged in relevant essential services within one week of release, and 85% successfully achieving desired program outcomes listed on their pre-release plan within 12 months of commencing the program.**
Performance indicators for Objective 4:
- 95% participants engage with Support Coordinator upon release from custody;
- 95% participants linked to relevant essential support service as detailed in their support plan;
- 85% successfully achieving desired program outcomes listed on their pre-release plan, within 12 months of commencing the program.

With respect to the performance indicators for this objective, although it is unclear how engagement in the program post-release was measured, all commencing participants were identified as engaged in relevant essential services post-release. A timeline for engagement was not specified. It is also unclear how achievement of desired program outcomes listed on pre-release plans were measured. No data was supplied to the evaluation team relating to this variable. Expected outcomes related to Objective 4 included: reduction in drug-taking behaviour; reduction in re-offence rates; and participants achieving either 26 weeks of durable training, work experience or paid employment. Although originally presented as expectations, a few of these objectives did include targets, and some measurable indicators of whether targets were achieved. However, the lack of data does not allow judgment of the effectiveness of the program in achieving these objectives.

Objective 5 - 90% of participants receive an appropriately planned and structured exit from the program 12 months after commencing the program, and 95% of collected participants’ feedback at program exit positively endorses the value of the program.

Performance indicators for Objective 5:
- 90% participants engaged with the program receive structured exit, including exit-interview;
- Where relevant, participants remain linked to relevant essential support service as detailed in their support plan;
- Mentorships have completed formal closure process prior to participant leaving the program;
- Feedback collected from participants at program exit confirms that the program was beneficial.

With respect to the performance indicators for this objective, 5 (of 20) participants exited the program in Year 1 and 7 (of 30) exited the program in Year 2. The total of active and exited participants identified in the data set for Year 1 is inconsistent with the number of commencements in the first year, at 29. Regardless of this inconsistency, the targets fall short of the identified objective of 90% of participants to receive a structured exit from the program 12 months following commencement. There is no data on participant feedback at program exit. Expected outcomes related to Objective 5 included: decreased stress resulting from knowing the ‘pathway’ that their support provision will be taking; shared understanding of the outcomes achieved while on the program; and valuable feedback and perceptions from participants about program experience. Presented originally as expectations, these objectives are all
subjective statements and cannot be measured. Although stress can be measured, stress measurement was never a part of program design. It is impossible to judge achievement of these objectives by observation alone.

Summary

Program performance in terms of pre-release training and engagement appears to have been quite good. Annual commencements exceeded the annual commencement target for both years. Completion of training achieved 96 percent of the annual training target in the first year, but fell short in the second year (at 48%). In terms of the number of support plans completed, the program met (Year 1) and exceeded (Year 2) targets. In relation to pre-release program delivery, therefore, the results were very good. With respect to post-release management, virtually all participants were reported to be linked to essential services, which once again, is a very positive outcome of the program.

Program performance in terms of the mentoring component was less impressive. Although the number of mentors recruited and trained was high in the first year (achieving 83% of the target), performance declined in the second year (achieving 63% of the target). This pattern was also observed in relation to mentorships established; the program achieving 83 percent and 38 percent of the target in each year respectively. Durable mentorships were very low in both years, but particularly so for the second year of the program. Difficulty in recruiting male mentors has been noted and discussed in other sections within this report.

Program performance in terms of employment outcomes, specifically, the number of participants placed into employment, was below expectations. The employment placements target was not met in either year (at 41% and 73%, respectively). Durable employment outcomes were also relatively low in both years of the program.

Having said this, there were some difficulties with the data files provided to the evaluation team. The key performance indicator data was provided in the form of excel files. For the most part, the data was clearly presented; however, the data in relation to mentoring, employment, and placement outcomes was somewhat confusing and difficult to interpret. Discussion with program staff did not clarify the situation. This could well be the result of staff changes within the program, particularly as it approached its end. As well, there appears to be some inconsistencies in the data with respect to the employment placement outcome data.

Data management difficulties are fairly common within programs during the initial years of its operation. Such difficulties are often associated with program staff workload demands that lead to compromises in record keeping in order to preserve quality in direct service provision. In any case, the difficulties experienced and incomplete records (not all outcome objectives that are measurable were measured) can be attributable to a number of reasons including: restriction of information provided to the program providers by DCS; the subjective and non-measurable nature of some of the stated objectives; multi-tasking and high work demands experienced by program staff; and the sometimes inconsistent movement of program participants in and out of program components.
5.4 Recommendations

We have discussed various aspects of 'best practice' and 'what works' in transition support programs for prisoners. As we stated earlier in this report, because Straight For Work is no longer operating, recommendations for improvement of the program are not relevant. Instead we have developed general recommendations for development and delivery of transition support programs for prisoners. Our recommendations are based on research literature, the research experience of the evaluation team, and analysis of the Straight For Work program. This section begins with a list of general recommendations that are presented and discussed. It culminates in presentation of a proposed model for integrated support systems. This model derives from ecological systems analysis and the concept of reintegration within the broader community.

Recommendation #1: Start with a program of sufficient scale

Many programs commence as 'pilot' programs, operating on a sub-optimal scale, and have difficulty achieving program objectives as a result. Such programs may even struggle to perform all necessary functions, also a result of sub-optimal funding or scale of operation. As we have seen in the case of the Straight For Work program, demands on program staff can be extensive and intensive when a small number of staff are required to fill a wide range of program functions. The requirements for multi-skilling and multi-tasking are substantially higher and more demanding with smaller programs. This issue is even more pronounced when the program target group has multiple, complex and/or dynamic support needs as do prisoners. The recommendation is that all transition support programs for prisoners should be designed and implemented to operate from the outset on a scale that supports the level of complexity and demand that can be expected, based on what is known about the support needs of the target group and the best way to address those needs (that is to say, via an integrated support system of networked providers).

Recommendation #2: Conduct a thorough needs and risk analyses

This recommendation pertains to resource needs and risks associated with every component of the proposed program and all relationships and resources upon which success of the program will depend. This should be done in conjunction with a needs analysis to avoid duplication of services and ensure demand for the program. A plan for managing risks should be developed prior to program commencement. Related to this activity is compilation of a 'portfolio of assets', an inventory of people and resources already available to contribute to the program. An 'asset development' process should also be established which included acquisition of expert staff, relevant training materials and other support materials, a suitable site from which to operate, and other relevant resources.

Recommendation #3: Conduct thorough network development

In our view, it is best to cover the multiple transition support needs of prisoners through a system of networked delivery rather than having one provider attempting to meet the full range of support needs characteristic of released prisoners or having to
engage in laborious and recurrent referral activity. Instead, prior to program commencement, an analysis of existing services should be conducted and formal agreements made to establish local networked service delivery. This requires commitment from all relevant service providers, positive working relations, excellent information exchange, and dedicated resources to maintain the network. Contributing members of such a network can partially subsidise the network cost through savings resulting from increased or less effortful incoming referrals.

**Recommendation #4: Market the whole program**

Often, transition support programs for prisoners are marketed as 'specific purpose' or 'single purpose' programs with 'add ons'. For example, the *Straight For Work* program was marketed as an employment and vocational education program with a mentoring program component, and range of referral and other ancillary services. This is a fairly typical way of profiling transition support programs for prisoners. In our view, it would be more advantageous to develop a broad program, with no 'lead' element. It is also important to present the program within its place of business and in all of its business materials as a professional development program.

By recommending that the whole program be marketed, we also mean that the novel, innovative nature of the program should be articulated in the program profile and promotion. The 'morality' of the program should be emphasised by making explicit the issue of multiple disadvantage experienced by the participant group and the intention to give them a 'fair go'. Finally, the socio-economic advantages should be pointed out in marketing the program. Broad socio-economic advantages include contributing to a safer community, reduced recidivism and reduced cost of the criminal justice system, and reduced health care system costs. These are all benefits that a transition support program can provide to the community and should be communicated as such.

**Recommendation #5: Focus on the capacity building function**

There is also a capacity building function to a transition support program for prisoners. This should be articulated as part of the program's profile and in promoting the program. Capacity building objectives and goals should be articulated as program objectives and goals and tracked and reported accordingly. Some capacity building outcomes of transitions support programs should be: formation of a local network of delivery through an integrated support service systems; improved communication among service providers; growth of relevant service providers through improved referrals; provision of mentor training to members of the community; and possible development of new/additional services to fill identified service gaps. Any aspect of the program that can contribute to strengthening or adding capacity to the community or to the service environment within the community should be included in the analysis of the capacity building function of the program.
Recommendation #6: Adopt an individualised ecological system model

An ecological system is a 'living system'. It is a system that sustains life, and it also has a life of its own. Ecological systems are dynamic, changing systems comprised of a multitude of inter-related, inter-dependent, and interactive elements. Communities are large ecological systems, macrocosms; we manage, manipulate, act, react, and adapt to the conditions around us. We are interactive agents within those systems. An individual's living environment is a smaller ecological system, a microcosm comprised of:

- Intra-personal elements such as personality, knowledge, skill sets, experience, behaviours, health conditions, credits and qualifications, even aspirations;
- Inter-personal elements such as social relations and networks, family relations, and formal relations such as work and professional, relations with service providers for various reasons, even mandated relations such as one might have within the criminal justice system;
- Material elements such as food, housing, income, mode of transport, and formal support services of various kinds;
- Wider community elements that impact on an individual's lifestyle such as local community culture, attitudes, socio-economic conditions, demographics and infrastructure such as public transport, amenities, and other elements that contribute to conditions in the community; and
- Wider societal elements that influence conditions within the system as a whole such as laws and public policies, governmental structures and processes, and broad cultural, demographic and economic conditions.

This is illustrative of the complex set of interactive (and changing) conditions to which an individual must respond when he/she is released from prison. The notion of reintegration within the community post-release is often rather a misnomer because many released prisoners have never really been integrated within their broader communities previously. As we have seen from this report, many prisoners and ex-prisoners experience multiple conditions of disadvantage across all five of the domains listed above. Many have lived marginalised or excluded from mainstream experiences.

Community reintegration is best understood as ecological system engagement, in terms of the compatibility of people's resources and needs and conditions within their living environment. A healthy 'match' between a person's characteristics and resources, their support needs being met, and conditions in the physical environment being safe is promotive of positive lifestyle change. As conditions change, compatibility can improve or worsen over time. Support services must be responsive over time. Reintegration is an individual-specific process, not an event. It is important to investigate the whole process from pre-release through lifestyle change.

It is also essential that support for prisoners with respect to reintegration within the community be individualised because of the diverse and dynamic nature of their conditions, situations and contexts. It is important to establish a focus on positive lifestyle change as the core objective of the program. Employment will/may come;
stable housing will/may come; freedom from addiction may come; desistance from crime may come; however, these should not be viewed within the program (or externally) as primary or core objectives. These result from positive lifestyle change. Transition support programs are really about helping to generate transformative change. Achieving positive changes in specific life conditions are the means to achieving positive lifestyle change on the larger scale. In our view, this is the most productive way of understanding and describing transition support programs for prisoners.

![Figure 3. A simple, three-part model of reintegration](image)

It is possible to characterise the ecology of reintegration in many ways. The model depicted in the figure is a very simplified one. It may be more useful to portray all five of the domains listed and described above. For purposes of considering 'everyday life', a simple model is not only sufficient, but preferred. This three-part model of reintegration allows one to concentrate on ensuring that conditions within all three areas are being addressed and needs met.

**Recommendation #7: Adopt ‘reintegration’ as the core program principle**

Rehabilitation models have been individual-focused and almost universally focused on addressing character defects and skill deficits. They tend to be program-oriented as well, measuring 'success' in terms of meeting program goals or simply attending the program in its entirety. They do not generally focus on real world context-oriented
success in vivo. Rehabilitation is an important element of a holistic approach to support for prisoners pre- and post-release, but not sufficient, in and of itself.

Desistance models are recently popular, but desistance is difficult to measure and narrow in focus. There is no real agreement among researchers how long an individual should be crime-free before being deemed as having desisted. Lack of conviction is also not an adequate measure of desistance. There are several points of view as to what produces desistance from crime as well. Perhaps more importantly, simply focusing on desistance from crime does nothing to address deeper or broader issues associated with multiple disadvantage and the long term detriments of many of those conditions.

Reintegration models have a focus on ‘people in context'; whole people and the context within which they live and strive to succeed. Resources, needs and environmental conditions are the basic concepts as we have described above. The objective of a reintegration model is sustained positive lifestyle change for prisoners. These objectives have implications for program content and focus:

**Increase the emphasis on transition support as the core purpose** – Transition support programs for prisoners should not be conceived, designed or delivered as single purpose programs with a core program such as employment, vocational education and training, or drug and alcohol treatment. Rather, transition support should be identified as the core/primary purpose with a wide range of support services associated with the program aimed at achieving enduring lifestyle change.

**A wide range of target outcomes should be included** – With respect to measurable outcomes of transition support programs, inclusion of a wide range of target outcomes should be included, with recognition that outcomes will be achieved through agencies to which the program provider has referred its clients. The target outcomes should include: educational and vocational training achievements; work experiences; employment placements and outcomes; drug and alcohol treatment engagement and drug and alcohol use decline/cessation; improved management or self management of chronic ill-health conditions and improved health status; and responsiveness and effectiveness of the service including referrals to other providers. Formalised reporting of this wide range of target outcomes (some of which are achieved through other agents) should be standard procedure.

**Lengthen transition support program eligibility time** – Typically, transition support programs provide support for between six months and one year. Often this involves a pre-release phase of approximately three months and a post-release phase of nine months. This was the case for the *Straight For Work* program. Our earlier research (Graffam et al., 2005) indicates that it is not until approximately 9 months post-release that a large proportion of ex-prisoners begin to experience stability in relation to even very basic measures such as how many nights per month they slept in their primary residence, days worked per month, alcohol and/or drug consumption per month, and income earned per month. Recidivism is generally measure in relation to a two year time frame because the majority of reoffending occurs in the first two years post-release. Therefore, it is obvious that, for many people, transition support is needed for a longer period than one year (pre- and post-release combined). Our recommendation is for two years of transition support.
Provide a whole of government response – A whole of government response is needed to effectively address community reintegration needs of prisoners. Because this approach is a ‘normalising’ one, it is important for generic services to be receptive to accepting former prisoners. State and Commonwealth government departments responsible for health, housing, employment, vocational education and training, and general social welfare should work together with non-government organisations to provide a policy and program framework that is inclusive of former prisoners. Considering their needs within a criminal justice specific environment does not promote reintegration within the community.

Recommendation #8: Develop a system of integrated support
In our view, the most effective way of achieving delivery of transition support that provides sustainable, positive lifestyle change for prisoners is through an integrated local support system of networked providers. At the core of the network would be a Transition Support Program (TSP) responsible for coordination of the network, case management of individual support plans, relationship management pertinent to networked providers, and crisis intervention (short term support for clients in crisis for any reason). Elements of such an integrated local system of networked support would include: health services; housing services; employment services; drug and alcohol treatment; personal and family counseling; and access to vocational training and education provision, as obvious examples. From a client services perspective, this model would include four fundamental elements:

Analysis and mapping of individual resources and support needs – Each individual brings a unique blend of resources and needs to the transition process. An inventory of resources and needs should by compiled in consultation with each client and support needs ‘mapped’ in relation to the network of services provided within the local community. In this way, service gaps can be identified. Identification of service gaps can be addressed through joint effort of networked providers.

Implementation of a comprehensive transition support plan – Each individual will benefit from implementation of an operational plan for achieving sustainable positive lifestyle change. Once the analysis of resources and needs is completed, an individual transition support plan can be developed and implemented. Through this, individuals’ progress can be monitored. Such plans should themselves be dynamic, subject to regular review and updating as individual support needs change over time.

Access to all relevant support services – It is of obvious importance that individuals have ready access to whatever support services they need. Formation of a local integrated network of providers can allow rapid and reliable referrals to appropriate support services. Communication and exchange of information between networked providers would facilitate effective service provision across agencies. The prospect of co-location of services is another advantage of a local network.

Responsiveness to emergent needs of individual clients – In recognition of the dynamic and interactive nature of conditions, and the often fragile state of released prisoners and their resource base, it is imperative that support provision be very responsive. It is well recognized that crises can come with little or no warning, and the need for assistance can be immediate. It is imperative that an effective transition
support program be able to provide assistance on a very short term basis. This must be factored into design and costing of a transition support program.

**An integrated system of support**

An integrated local support system of networked providers, if organized and managed well, can provide the means for achieving sustainable, positive lifestyle change for prisoners. How such a system would be structured is through a 'central' Transition Support Program (TSP) that served to coordinate and case manage relevant support services for individual clients. Figure 4 below depicts what such a system might look like.

Figure 4. An Integrated System of Support

Such an integrated system of support has several advantages. It provides networked referrals, enhanced communication among relevant parties, and the potential for shared resources. Such a system can be individualized in the sense that elements can be added or deleted as appropriate to any individual. For example, the "?" that is included in the figure above is indicative of the 'open' nature of the system. Any relevant support services (one or more) can simply be added with the assumption that the provider becomes part of the integrated system for the individual. Such a system can minimise duplication, reduce 'referral chasing', improve the performance of each provider, produce or approximate a 'seamless' network of services, better protect program participants from attrition and recidivism. The cost of establishing
and maintaining such a system is no more than the cost of good business practices and can be absorbed by various resource savings gained by providers within the system.
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87


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Appendix 1

Structure and Content of the Interviews

The evaluation of the Straight For Work project involved the development and administration of stakeholder and mentor interviews. Interview questions were developed for WISE program delivery staff, Department of Corrective Services Staff, and mentorees from the Straight For Work program. The interview with the WISE program delivery staff included 13 questions relating to their role and responsibilities, their perspectives on the Straight For Work program (e.g., in terms of key elements and objectives), potential improvements to the program, and their view on key relationships. The interview with DoCS staff included 11 questions relating to their role and responsibilities, their perspectives on the Straight For Work program (e.g., in terms of key elements), and positive and negative aspects of the program. The interview with Straight For Work mentors covered broad areas relating to mentor recruitment, mentor training (process, content, and plan for mentor contact), participant-mentor match (process and effect), as well as general comments relating to the value of the mentoring component and what they got from the experience of being a mentor. The questions for all interviews were open-ended and allowed for additional comment.

Procedures in Conducting the Interviews

The research team emailed or telephoned potential interviewees to organise interviews. All interviews were conducted at locations that were convenient for the interviewees, either in person at their place of work or by telephone. At the time of scheduling the interviews, participants were informed of the expected duration of the interviews, and the type of content that was to be covered. Participants were also asked if they agreed to have their interview tape-recorded. Prior to the commencement of each interview, all participants were provided with a Plain Language Statement explaining the purpose of the evaluation, the purpose of the interviews, the duration of the interviews, and information regarding withdrawal from participation. All participants signed a Consent Form prior to the commencement of the interview.

Interviews were audio-taped, with the interviewer taking extensive written notes as well. Interviews were then transcribed, transmitted to interviewees for revision, clarification, or elaboration, so that the transcript reflected precisely their intended view. Interviewees were also advised at the time of the interview that they could add an addendum to the transcript if they had more to contribute. The revised transcripts were returned to Deakin University and became the formal and official account of the interview. A content analysis was subsequently conducted.

In all cases, the interview concluded with a question about whether there were any 'other questions' that had not been, but should have, been asked. Throughout each interview, the interviewer allowed interviewees to deviate from the sequence of questions to suit their own style of responding and way of conceptualising issues and processes in question. In conducting all interviews, the interviewer ensured that each question had been addressed to the satisfaction of the interviewee before moving ahead. Interviews ranged somewhat in length between 1.00 and 1.5 hours.