



Women's Integrated Support Program - (WISP)

Women's Prison Region

Correctional Services Administrators Council (CSAC)
7th National Women Offenders Conference

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Overview



- **What** is WISP
- **Why** was it developed
- **How** was WISP developed and implemented
- **Issues** that have been identified



Women's Integrated Support Program



- pre and post release support program for women exiting prison
- a flexible, well-being based case management service
- provides a planned and responsive approach to addressing women's multiple, diverse transitional needs



Women's Integrated Support Program



Aims to:

- support women to (re)-integrate back into the community
- provide support and assistance in addressing practical transitional needs on release



Women's Integrated Support Program



Target group: women who:

- are in custody and have been sentenced;
- are at high or moderate risk of re-offending;
- have high and complex support needs; and
- can demonstrate a willingness to participate in the program.



Why was WISP developed?

- to achieve an amalgamation of functions that were provided by discrete programs into a single, integrated intensive case management service;
- to reduce the confusion caused by the wide range of entry points to transitional support services;



Why was WISP developed?



- to reduce the duplication across programs and the potential for unproductive competition for the same client base;
- to provide a seamless service for women with multiple transitional needs and improved coordination of services;
- to allow for greater alignment between transitional support and correctional interventions;



Why was WISP developed?



- to enable the activities of the prison, transitional support provider and community correctional services to intersect at the point of release from prison;
- to provide an integrated service provider model;
- to provide an integrated service delivery model;



Guiding Principles



Women's Correctional Services Framework

- Strengthening relationships
- Addressing varied and complex needs
- Providing respect and safety
- Creating opportunities
- Responding to diversity
- Informed by best practice



Putting theory into practice



In theory:

- A major gender difference is evident in the way women respond to intervention.
- Reflecting the centrality of children and child care responsibilities.



Putting theory into practice



In practice:

- Women present with a greater need to establish and maintain relationships.
- Incorporating women's personal goals in relation to parenting and or family reunification.
- Provision of practical support to women to assist them in balancing their correctional obligations and primary carer responsibilities.



Putting theory into practice



In theory:

- Women are more likely than their male counterparts to have histories of trauma and victimisation.
- As well as issues with substance use and mental health and with high co-morbidity.



Putting theory into practice



In practice:

- To address these issues holistically.
- Supporting women to address past trauma and victimisation.
- Integrating therapeutic responses with culturally appropriate interventions that give women the opportunity to take responsibility.



Putting theory into practice



In theory:

- Respect and safety are important factors in assisting women transition into the community.
- There is a strong link for women between offending behaviour and poor self esteem.



Putting theory into practice



In practice:

- Providing links to positive role models and individuals who can provide support beyond the normal working hours.
- Developing respectful relationships which provide opportunities for women to build their coping skills and self esteem via appropriate and relevant practical supports.



Putting theory into practice



In theory:

- Women experience significant socioeconomic disadvantage arising from gender related differences in earnings, employment outcomes and child rearing that are compounded by victimisation and substance use.



Putting theory into practice



In practice:

- Providing viable opportunities for improving life skills and opportunities through education, training and work options which are of relevance to women's development and go beyond traditional female work opportunities.
- Provision of practical and financial assistance can also assist to reduce economic pressures that are linked to women's offending.



Our experience over the past 12 months



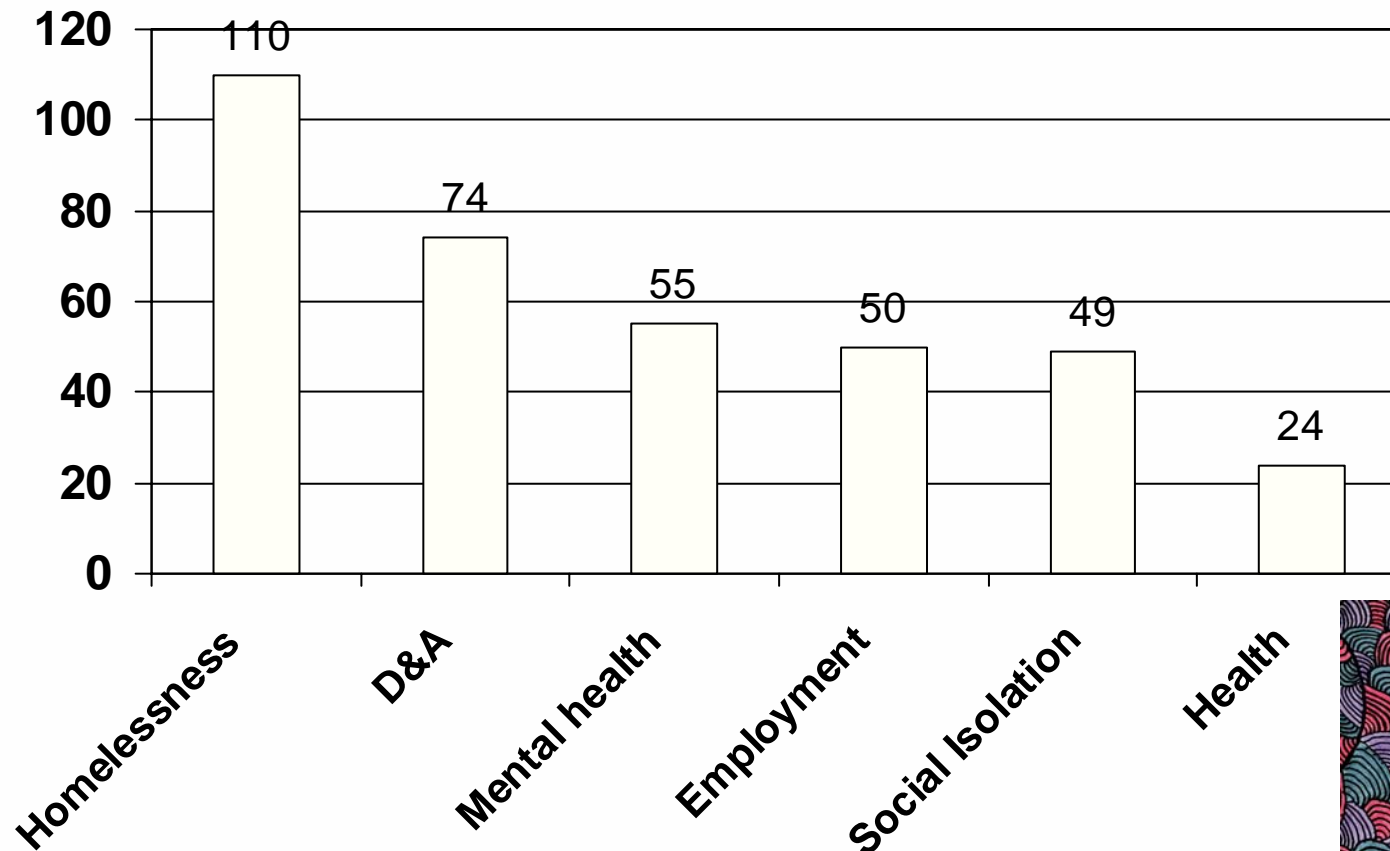
- 132 women supported
 - 252 women in Victorian Prisons
- Majority between the ages of 26-44
 - 50% between 26-34
- 10% Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- 62% Women with children
 - 78% of the children were 15 or under



Issues women face

DEPARTMENT
OF JUSTICE

State Government
Victoria



- Debt
- OoH
- Centrelink
- Utilities
- Other



Continuity



- Up to 12 months support post-release
 - 8 –10 weeks pre-release
- Option of staying connected after support period
 - “Women About”
 - Prison Network Ministries
 - VACRO Mentors



Examples of success



- “What it means for the boys”
- “Mum & bub”



Greatest challenges for the partnership



- Communication
- Multi layers
- Time required
- Accountability



Question time

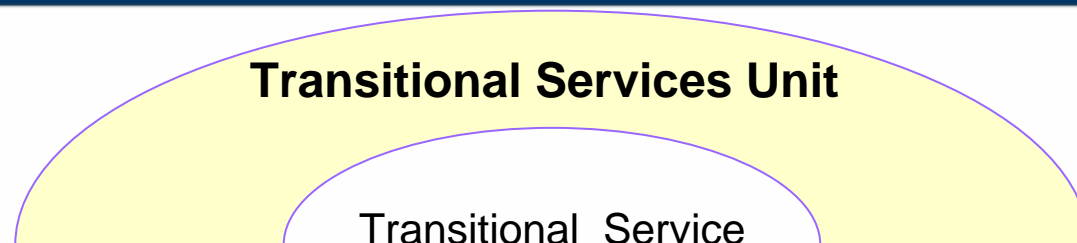
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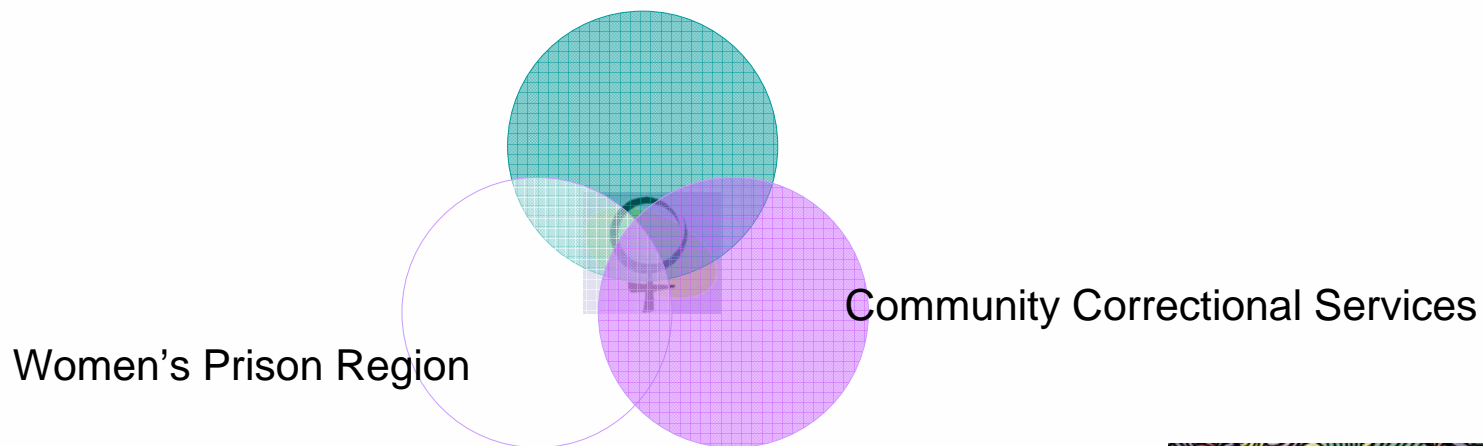
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Key stakeholders



Transitional Service Provider

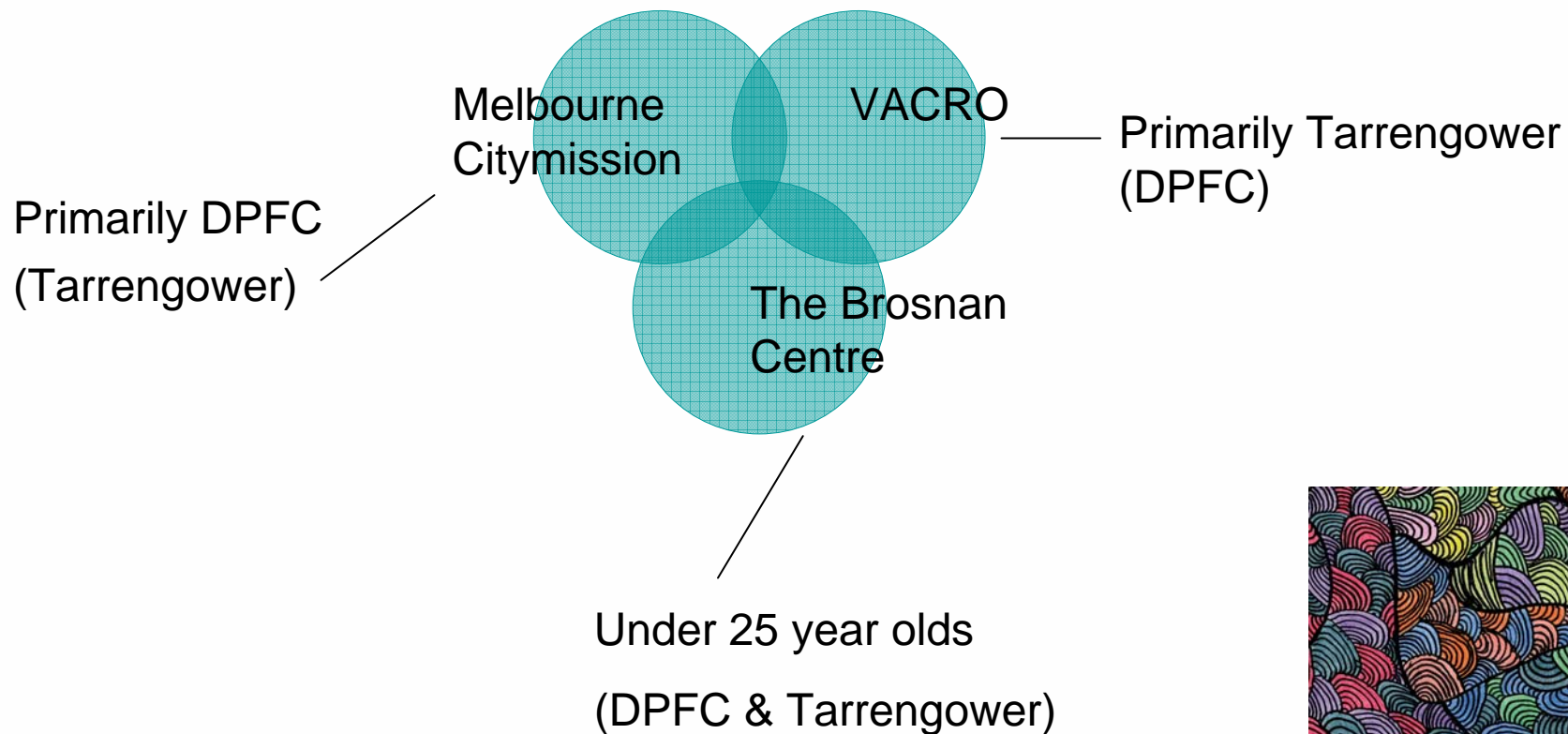


Women's Prison Region

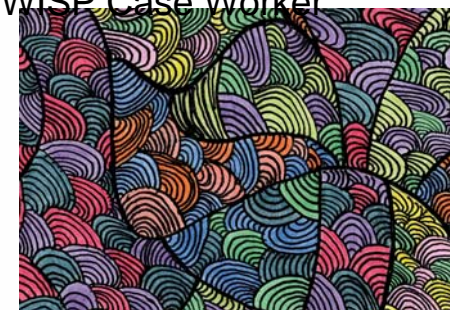
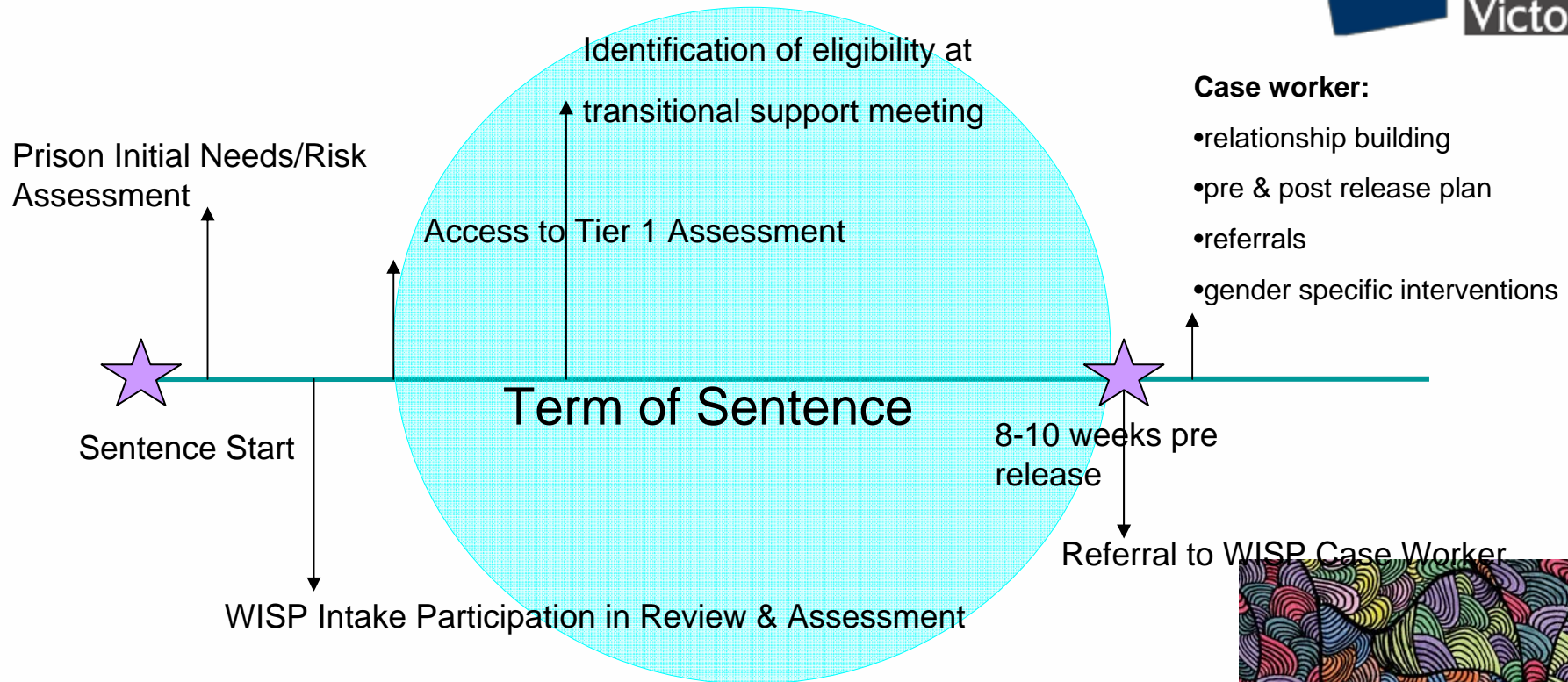
Community Correctional Services



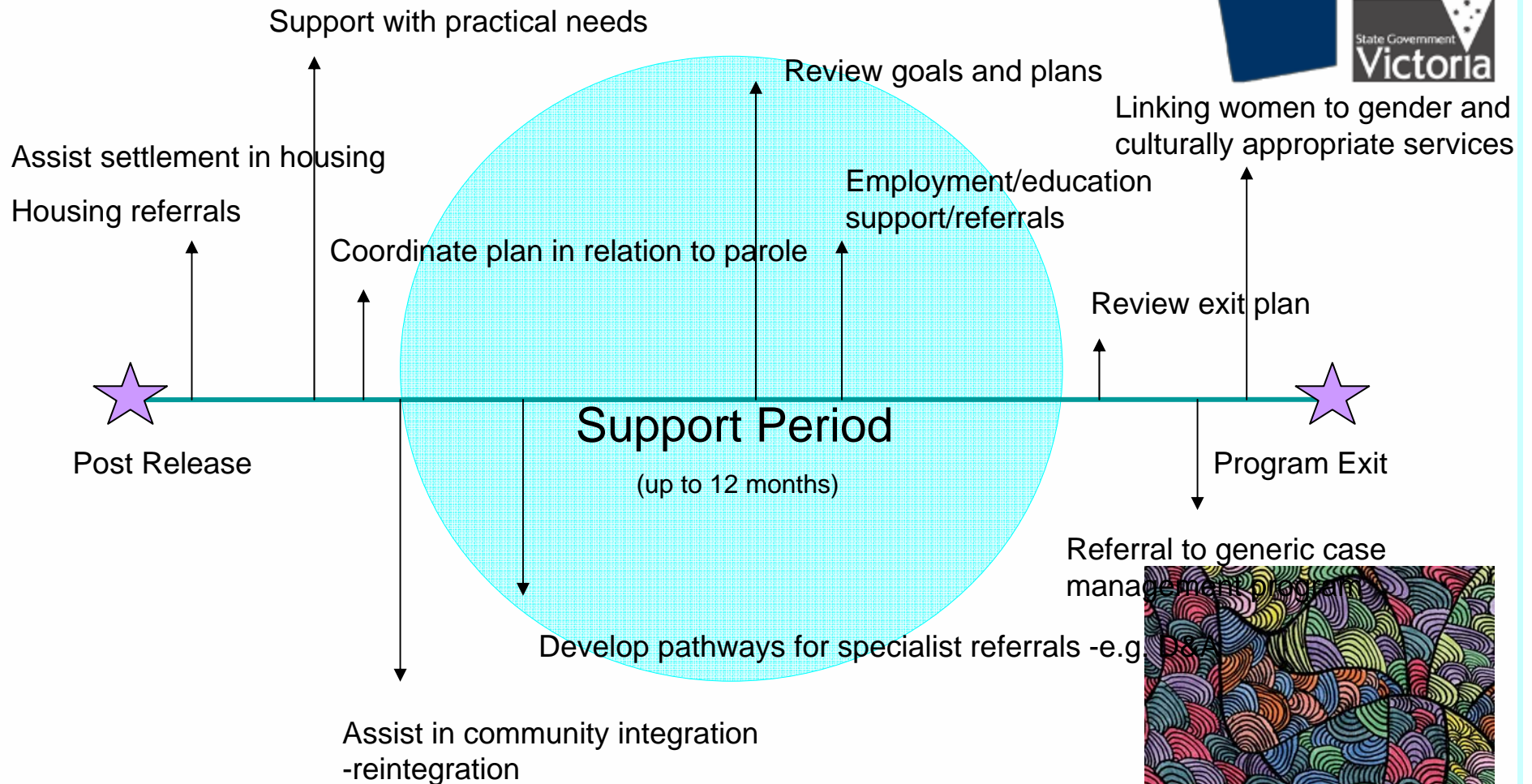
Integrated service provider model



Integrated service delivery model - pre release



Integrated service delivery model - post release



Key stakeholders

