

# Correctional Services & Facilities for Women in Victoria: Challenges in Achieving Change for Women Prisoners and the Way Forward

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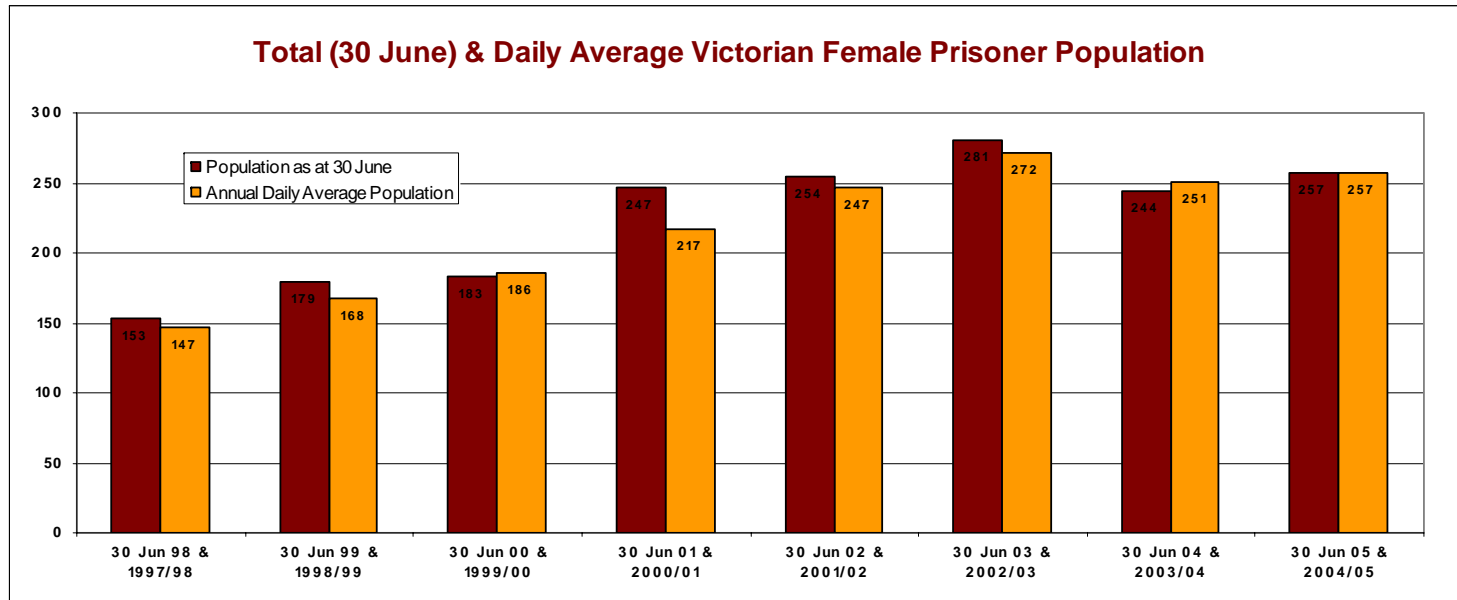


# Presentation Overview

- Introduction
- Victorian situation
- Changing women prisoner & offender profiles
- Increased prisoner populations
- Needs of women prisoners
- Victorian and Australian imprisonment rates
- History of Women's Prisons Region
- First steps - operational changes
- Managing a female prison system
- Steps to sustaining a positive culture
- An opportunity for innovation

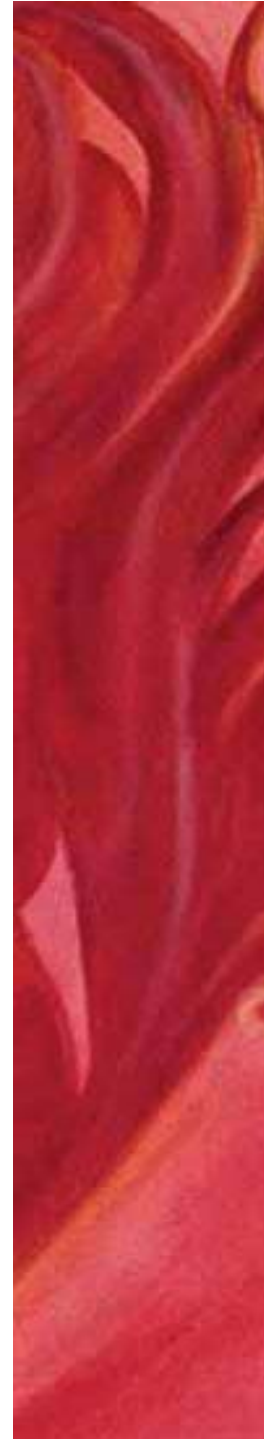


# Increased female prisoner population



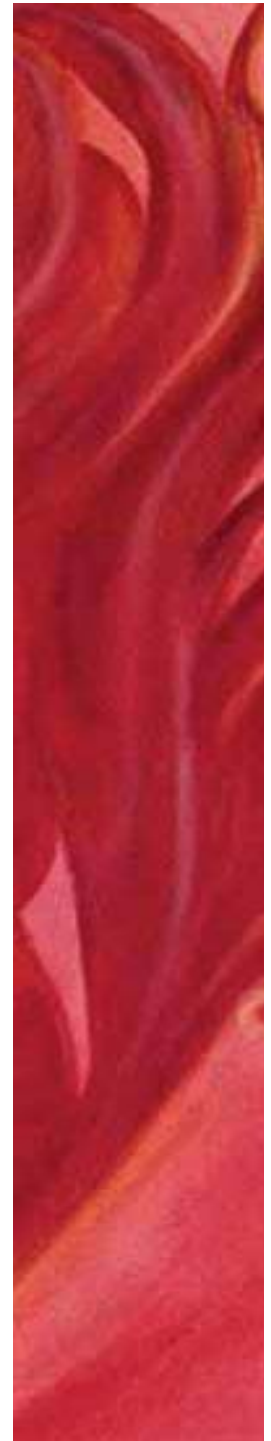
# What has led to the increase?

- More women committing serious violent offences
- Increasing use of remand
- Reduction in use of community-based orders for first-time offenders
- Increased prison-based sentences
- More women sentenced to short-term imprisonment of less than one month
- Increased numbers of women breaching non-custodial orders



# Needs of women prisoners

- Substance abuse
- Mental illness especially depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress
- Poor social networks
- Poor education and employment histories
- Low levels of financial literacy
- Poor parenting skills



# Imprisonment Rates per 100,000 Adult Population

## Victoria

Men	197.3
Women	12.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>102.6</b>

## Australia

Men	307.6
Women	23.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>163.4</b>



# History of Women's Prisons Region

- Tarrengower – minimum security 54 bed prison – opened in 1988
- Fairlea Women's Prison closed in 1996
- Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (formerly Deer Park Metropolitan Women's Correctional Centre) opened in 1996 – formerly 125 bed, now 260 bed maximum security prison
- Privately operated from 1996 until 2000
- Returned to State in 2000
- Formation of the Victorian Women's Prisons Region in October 2000



# First steps – operational changes

- Stabilised situation
- Listened, observed and consulted
- Management regimes
- Staff culture and ratios
- Staff training in gender and cultural issues



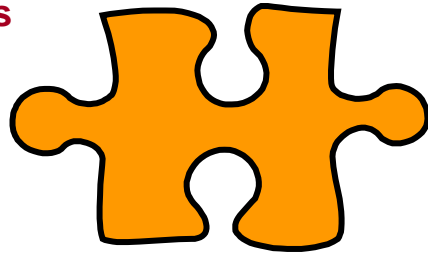
# Managing a female prison system – doing things differently

- Balancing the needs of the women, staff and stakeholders is a challenge.
- Accommodation options for women prisoners are limited to two multi-functional facilities.
- The women's system needs to be gender responsive; not just a replica of the male prison system.
- Strip searching protocols have changed
- Use of force and escort procedures have changed



# Steps to sustaining a positive culture

## Culture & Procedures

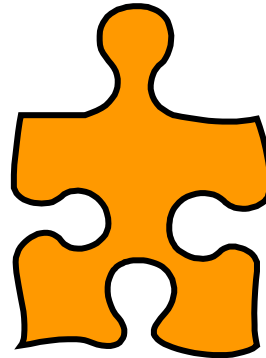


- Relationships
- Staff recruitment
- Cultural awareness
- Gender responsive training
- Professional & ethical boundaries
- Staff gender balance
- Dynamic security
- Transparent complaints processes



# Steps to sustaining a positive culture

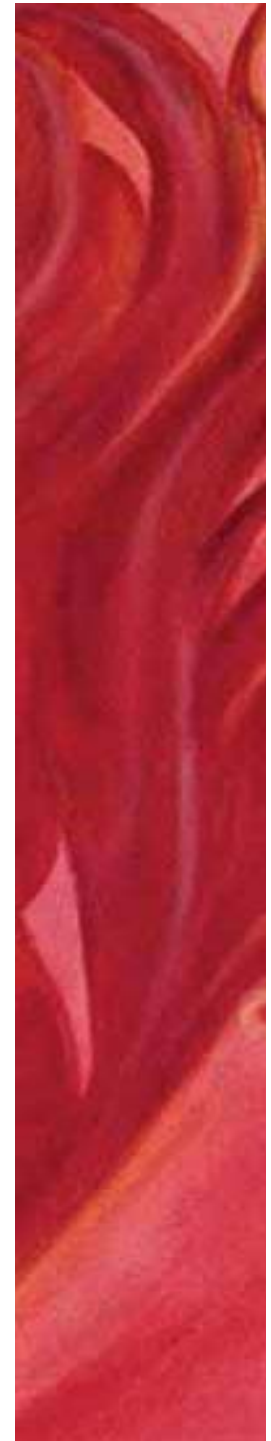
Victorian Government provided AUD\$25.5 million funding to improve women's prison facilities



**Policy Framework,  
Programs & Services**

*Better Pathways* strategy is based upon four themes:

- Reduce women's offending
- Reduce women's imprisonment
- Reduce women's re-offending
- Reduce women's victimisation

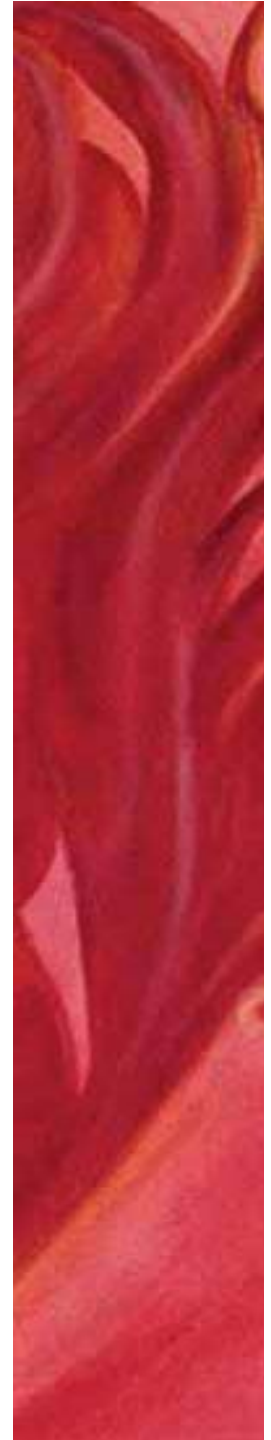
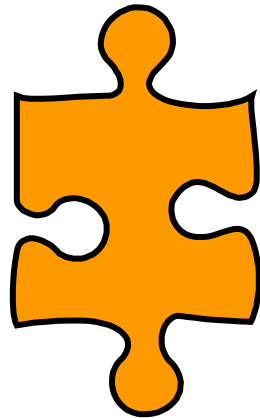


# Steps to sustaining a positive culture

*Better Pathways* is funding better facilities:

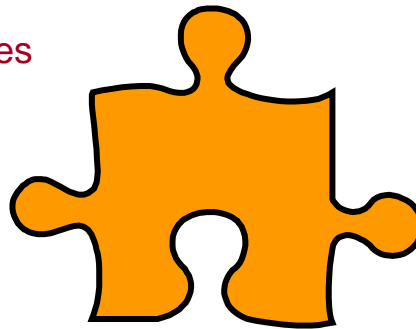
- The new Marmak Mental Health Unit
- Renovated medical centre, visits centre, education and industries buildings
- A new programs building
- Healing Space & Sacred Garden

**Buildings &  
Infrastructure**



# Steps to sustaining a positive culture

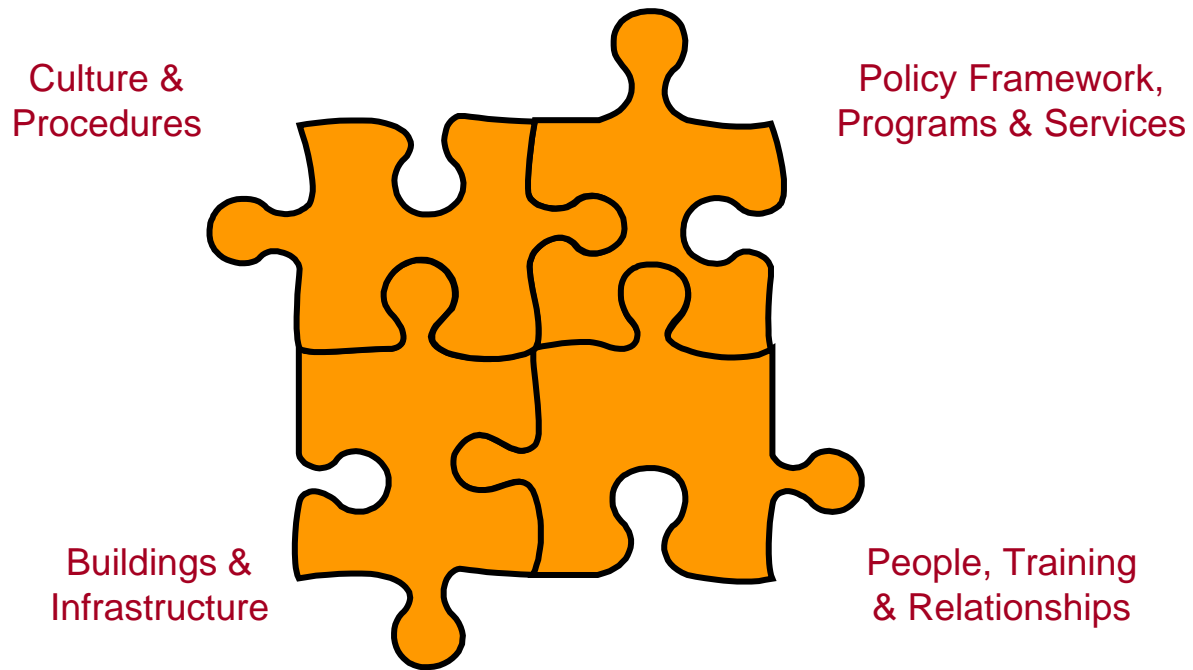
- Training
- Cultivating good judgement
- Applying fairness
- A one-size-fits-all approach  
doesn't achieve the best results
- Managing demographic differences  
between staff and prisoners



**People, Training  
& Relationships**



# Steps to sustaining a positive culture



# An Opportunity for Innovation

- A women's system – a fresh approach
- A review of the women's structured day
- A progressive approach to prison industries
- Focused upon treatment and family rather than work
- A new approach to visits

