

Making the Strategy Work

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

A number of new initiatives will support the Strategy's implementation. These include initiatives to improve case planning for each prisoner, a new framework model to reduce re-offending, development of a risk and needs assessment tool to improve treatment and management of prisoners both on an individual and macro-planning level, the development of prison drug action plans to improve each prison's ability to manage drug use, and the establishment of drug-free accommodation units.

These initiatives will assist the Victorian Government to keep improving the Strategy's initiatives. They will also assist prison managers to effectively target resources to achieve the Strategy's objectives.

Key Strategies and Services

Case management

Case management is one of the primary means of ensuring that individual prisoner's issues are being appropriately addressed. Each prisoner is allocated a case manager who develops a case plan that addresses their drug issues, treatment needs and offending behaviour, as well as personal development, educational, vocational, recreational, and re-integration needs.

Prisons in Victoria undertake a number of processes to support effective case management, including Review and Assessment Committees, case conferencing, monthly case manager meetings, and liaison between prison and programs staff. These processes help ensure that programs and services are accessible and effective in addressing prisoners' issues.

New Initiatives

Reducing Re-offending Framework

The development of a new Reducing Re-offending Framework will provide an umbrella of policies and initiatives that aim to reduce re-offending. Having such a framework in place will help to ensure that initiatives to reduce re-offending are integrated and consistent across the state and that resources are directed where they will be most effective. A key objective of this Framework is to assess needs and risks effectively and then tailor resources and programs to the needs of individual prisoners to maximise chances of success.

Effectively reducing re-offending will require an environment conducive to rehabilitation and programs that have demonstrated integrity and effectiveness. The Framework has the twin goals of improving prisoner risk management and increasing their personal capabilities. This means that offence-related programs will assist prisoners to prevent further harm to society while personal development programs will improve quality of life and reduce the likelihood of prisoner harm to self. The principles and values of this approach include dealing with prisoners in a fair, open and humane manner.

Development of a risk and needs assessment tool

Central to the new Strategy and the Reduced Re-offending Framework is the need to have an effective means of identifying and assessing prisoners' risks and needs, so that appropriate programs and services can be provided to respond to their issues. A risk and needs assessment tool will facilitate this function.

Prisoners will be assessed when they are received into custody to assist in matching them to relevant programs and prison locations. They will then be re-assessed prior to release to measure any changes in their level of risk and needs, refer them to relevant transitional programs, and manage transitional community linkages.

Offender management

As part of the Reduced Re-offending Framework, the development of an integrated system of offender management will facilitate the timely, just and effective management of prisoners and ensure that management strategies used are in line with individual prisoner's needs.

The development of the offender management system assumes that prisoners have different offence-specific and offence-related needs. The system will use sophisticated risk and needs assessment processes to assign prisoners to appropriate levels of service based on identified needs. Dedicated staff with specialised skills in case managing high-risk offenders will be important to the development of this process.

This model also acknowledges the need to provide transitional support to prisoners. Given the variability of prisoners' transitional support needs, pre-release and exit planning is critical and provides a mechanism for targeting and matching risk and need with an appropriate level of intervention.

Prison drug action plans

Local prison drug action plans will be a vital development in improving the overall strategic response to drug use in Victoria's prisons. These action plans will ensure that the needs of the specific prisons and their prisoners are met through a co-ordinated approach to supply control, detection and deterrence initiatives, treatment and harm reduction programs.

The rationale behind the development of prison drug action plans is that prisons differ in their demographic profile of prisoners as well as having varying operational and prisoner management systems. The prison drug action plans will detail activities to achieve the principles, goals and key elements of the Strategy, as well as giving due consideration to the nature of the prison location and particular needs of the prisoner population.

Drug-free accommodation units

Many people in prison who have drug issues are not at high-risk of drug-related death, illness or re-offending and so are not eligible to participate in intensive drug treatment. These prisoners remain at some risk, however, and this situation is best managed by creating a living environment that is free of drugs.

As part of the future development of the Victoria's prison system, the Office of the Correctional Services Commissioner, in association with prison operators, will trial the establishment of drug-free accommodation units in a number of prisons. These units will be designed for prisoners who wish to live in, and prison staff who desire to work in, a drug-free environment.

In maintaining a drug-free environment, this accommodation should provide a safe and supportive environment for both prisoners and staff. Prisoners will need to agree to a number of principles, conditions and regulations as well as maintain suitable levels of treatment. Prisoners eligible for this accommodation will also have the opportunity of accessing certain incentives and privileges, and have greater scope for autonomy in day-to-day decision-making.

Monitoring the Strategy

ROLES AND ACTIVITIES

It is important that the new Strategy continues to evolve to achieve continuous improvement of the management of drugs in Victoria's prisons, drive new policy development, and to ensure that new developments are evidence-based and best practice. This will be achieved through a comprehensive and planned approach to monitoring, research and evaluation of the Strategy's initiatives.

A comprehensive evaluation program will measure the quality and performance of the various elements of the Strategy. It will also determine if prisons are implementing the Strategy in accordance with its aims, procedures and measurable performance indicators.

As part of the monitoring process, the Office of the Correctional Services Commissioner will collect and analyse information obtained from prison operators and service providers to determine the success of the Strategy.

Office of the Correctional Services Commissioner

The Office of the Correctional Services Commissioner will monitor the implementation of the Strategy against objective, observable and measurable performance indicators to determine the impact on:

- the prevalence of drug use in prison;
- shifting types and patterns of drug consumption in prisons;
- prison drug-health and drug-related incidents;
- effectiveness of barrier control and search activities;
- in-prison and post-release overdoses;
- uptake and retention of prison drug treatment;
- referrals to post-release services; and
- drug and alcohol-related re-offending.

The Office of the Correctional Services Commissioner will also oversee processes undertaken by the prison operators to fulfil the goals of the Strategy, particularly through:

- establishment of a Drug Strategy Reference Committee which will monitor, assess and report on the progress of the new Strategy;
- development of meaningful performance indicators to measure qualitative and quantitative aspects of the Strategy;