THE PARRAMATTA TRANSITIONAL CENTRE

INTEGRATING FEMALE INMATES INTO THE COMMUNITY BEFORE RELEASE

Cleo Lynch
Manager Parramatta Transitional Centre
Department of Corrective Services
New South Wales.
THE PARRAMATTA TRANSITIONAL CENTRE
Integrating Female Inmates into the Community before Release
Cleo Lynch

Introduction

This conference which has as its theme Women in Corrections, is the ideal forum at which to discuss the Parramatta Transitional Centre. Because the Parramatta Transitional Centre is a gender specific facility, staffed entirely by women, working with women, in corrections. All the resources of this Centre, the energy and the finances, are dedicated exclusively to women.

Established as a result of the Women’s Action Plan (p. 5), the Parramatta Transitional Centre provides

“... a minimum security, community-based facility to prepare selected female inmates of NSW correctional centres for their post-release responsibilities in a safe, drug and alcohol free environment.” (p. 5, Management Plan).

So the Centre is effectively a pre-release half-way house for female inmates. From this setting the women go into the community for counselling, education, employment and recreation. This Centre then is the bridge between corrections and the community, but it is “a two way traffic bridge” (C. Lynch, speech at official opening, June 1996), effectively involving the community in the process of the reintegration of female offenders into society. And given that our clients come from the community, and will return to the community, it seems logical that the community and corrections should work together.

The Transitional Centre (TC) then is on the cutting edge of corrections and the community (ibid); and from here the women negotiate the journey from incarceration to freedom.

Why a Transitional Centre

Although the women in our correctional centres participate in many external programs, at the end of the day they still live in institutions, and institutions by their very nature work against the empowerment of individuals. The strategies to survive in gaol are often the antithesis of those needed to thrive in society. In Connie’s words:

“Although I can’t wait to get out and I hate being locked up it has become quite comfortable for me. I know it, I know where I stand, I know what I can and can’t do, I know what’s acceptable and what’s not. It’s like a safety blanket. Where I reside, the Parramatta Transitional Centre in Parramatta, everyone knows me and accepts me even though at times I don’t accept myself. I’ve been on the works’ release program for the last eighteen months, so I have been going out to the community for a while. Some of that has been really hard but I have learnt to hide behind the veil of Corrective Services. If anything has gotten hard or I have been asked to do what I haven’t felt up to doing I’ve always used the excuse of ‘I can’t because I’m in gaol.’ Well in ten days all that...
finishes and I won’t have that excuse.

It’s like gaol is a room well lit up and I know where everything is, so if I look around I won’t trip over, and getting out is like a dark room and I don’t know where anything is and the only way I’m going to find out is by fumbling and feeling my way around. That thought scares the hell out of me.”

Even though Connie had spent the last eighteen months of her sentence at the Transitional Centre “getting out was pretty hard to do.” (Corrective Services Bulletin p.7). And if getting out is so scary from a community based transitional centre, then being released from gaol can often be the catalyst for as many problems as solutions (Northcott, Getting Out: Women Prisoners’ View of their Training Needs). The TC aims to prepare its residents for “community living through structured programs focusing on developing their skills” (Management Plan, p.3).

Because of the organisational structure the staff are able to work intensively with the women on their caseloads.

Organisational and staffing structure.

The staffing of the TC is has some unique features. First of all the Department of Corrective Services was granted an exemption under 31(c) of the Anti-Discrimination Act, so that all staff could be designated female. Even more innovative however was the commitment to negotiate a special industrial award, the Transitional Centre Workers’ Award. This allows the Centre to recruit specifically to its staffing needs. All staff, including the Administration Officer, report to the Manager, who reports directly to the Regional Commander. So the Parramatta Transitional Centre is also autonomous.

Six permanent Transitional Centre Workers (TCWs) work eight hour rotating shifts, supplemented by a pool of on-call casual TCWs. While the staff are non-uniformed, correctional officers are encouraged to apply when positions are advertised. In practice the composition of staff, both permanent and casual, reflects a range of disciplines, including welfare workers, social workers, occupational therapists, psychologists and alcohol and other drug workers. However, their role is that of TCW, and combines elements of custodial, welfare and referral roles. Nevertheless this diverse group brings a range of skills and knowledge critical to the effective case management of clients.

Who are the clients?

As this Centre was a first, it was decided to minimise risks which would attract adverse public attention and comment. Specific criteria for intending residents are as follows:

- category 1 (minimum security)
- serving the last 3-18 months of sentence
- not on appeal
- no active drug and alcohol problem (refer to mission statement)
- no active order to be removed from the country
• no active order to be transferred to an interstate jurisdiction
• commitment to case goals
• suitable medical assessment
• assessed by the Mothers' and Children’s Program Committee (MCPC) as suitable to live with children. (A paper on this program is also being presented at this conference)

These are the guidelines, however there are exceptions and a special management plan may be implemented to accept someone who does not meet all of the above.

The Centre accommodates up to twenty-one women, some of whom may have children live with them. In practice most of the women come from our minimum security centre at Emu Plains, however they can also transfer across from Mulawa, the maximum security centre for female offenders.

Security and other operational procedures

The only obvious physical barrier to the houses is a picket fence. The premises are alarmed for the protection of both the staff and the women who are vulnerable to unauthorised persons entering the property. The perimeter alarms on both houses are set at night, and the TCWs wear a duress alarm.

The TC has to operate within the legal and procedural parameters of the Department of Corrective Services. The staff conduct urinalysis, breath tests, room, bag and pat searches and field checks in the community. Over the years we have also developed a number of local procedures and strategies which reinforce the conditions of the legal instrument of transfer to the community (Section 26(2)(j) of the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999 No 93).

The management plan for the Centre stipulates participatory management so the women themselves work with us to maintain the security and integrity of the program. Each house has an elected representative who also sits on the Management Committee. This committee comprises members of the community and representatives from other sections of the Department, and oversees the management of the Centre. The committee has the authority to direct any complaints or concerns to the Regional Commander.

However essentially the Centre functions on case management and dynamic security.

Case management at the TC

Empowerment of the client is the philosophy which underpins case management at the TC. Case management should empower clients and assist them to take control of their lives and decisions. However it needs to be acknowledged that corrections places obligations on clients to address particular goals as part of the case management plan as they progress through the system. Releasing authorities then review this progress when making decisions for parole. These authorities set the conditions for parole and so are responsible to the community for their decisions. So the environment itself has some expectations of the client’s engagement in the case management process. But is this insurmountable? Jocelyn Pollock sites Okun’s human
relationships counselling model as an empowerment model for working with offenders (Counseling Women in Prison, pp. 184-185). This model promotes responsibility, choice, self-worth and potential even in restricted environments. No one can change the past, but we can try to change the future. These principles are incorporated in case management at the TC.

Intensive contact also enhances the case management process. Pollock alludes to increased contact and greater attention to individual needs as elements of successful intervention (p. 190). The environment at the TC is conducive to increased communication between staff and residents, so case management is enhanced by the opportunities for frequent contact and identification of areas of need and concern. Once these areas have been identified they become the foci for case management; increased contact and discussion provide effective monitoring of progress and goals.

Role clarification and boundaries are also essential in case management. Staff at the TC have to ensure that conditions of classification and program participation are complied with; clients can choose to ignore these, however they also have to own the consequences of their decisions, which may result in a review of their program and their progress through the system. Trotter (Working with Involuntary Clients, p. 17) identifies role clarification as the first in his principles of effective casework practice, emphasising the need to engage in open and honest discussion on the dual role of the worker, and on areas of negotiation and non-negotiation (pp 47-51).

The nature of the counselling relationship is an element of role clarification which warrants particular mention in a workplace where there is minimal supervision for both staff and clients, and the environment itself facilitates intensive contact between them. One doesn’t need to dwell on the more sinister breaches of professional boundaries; rather there is a need to monitor the counselling relationship in the context of time and the limits on what a professional relationship can deliver. Too much talk takes time and energy which may be better utilised in supporting the woman to test new skills and knowledge which she may have acquired. The counsellor also needs to be aware of her own needs and unresolved issues; it may be that she over-identifies with the problems of the client and perceived issues of what is and is not fair and just. Sympathy rather than empathy may become a feature of this relationship, which reinforces helplessness rather than resolution of issues so that the woman can move on.

Nevertheless, working with the women for change and sharing with them their sense of achievement as they progress is probably what continues to motivate staff regardless of the client intensive environment. Certainly their motivation is reflected in the low levels of sick leave and virtually no accrual of overtime.

The manager oversees the case management process, ensuring the timely and appropriate recording of case notes and case reviews and the compilation of required reports.

What works and what doesn’t - the perennial debate

This paper will not attempt to engage in this debate but rather will focus on what is implemented at the Parramatta Transitional Centre. At this Centre actions and experiences are
the predominant bases for learning.

- "Talking and sharing is good but doing is better. The most successful treatment has been shown to have active elements... (Counseling Women in Prison p.200).

Pollock also makes the point that "life's problems" will not go away. While encouraging the women to own their decisions and the consequences, we also work with them to identify what changes might make a difference.

I have already outlined some features of case management as it is practised at the Centre. We also conduct some programs on-site, but of major importance are the opportunities for the women to establish themselves in the community while still serving a sentence. The following are some of these initiatives, not necessarily in order of importance; in fact they are all interdependent.

**Employment and Education**

The women are actively encouraged and supported to find employment. Sometimes they have skills which translate readily into paid employment, however the particular offence may mitigate against the type of employment, for example, a fraud-related offence would preclude responsibility for financial duties. These women are encouraged to retrain in other skills.

Sometimes the women have limited skills and have not attended courses during their incarceration to increase their skills level. But at this stage of their sentence they are desperate to work and earn money, particularly if they have a family to support. In this case we work with their needs, while encouraging and supporting them to undertake vocational courses to enhance their employment options. Sometimes the women are full-time students who want part-time work; sometimes they have no previous stable work history at all but want to work and earn money. Factor in Aboriginality and English as a second language and all these barriers are raised again.

Shand identifies employability as one effective component of a pre-release/transition program (Pre-Release/Transition: Inmate Programs and Support Upon Entry, During Incarceration, and After Release).

Women offenders themselves have also identified this as a major hurdle on release:

"Clearly finding a job is a major concern to many women.......It is better in my view to acknowledge that full time employment may not be an option for many of them at this point in time." (Northcott, p.167).

It is also our experience that working and earning money are primarily what most women want and at the TC this is a priority. We assist all the women to find work while still encouraging and assisting them to upgrade their skills and knowledge. And at least the women can start to build up a work history. At the time this paper was written, seventeen of the twenty residents work at some form of external employment, including a woman whose two pre-school children reside with her at the Centre. Another woman is working at a pre-works' release
position in a clerical environment because she needs the experience of working under supervision to deal appropriately with frustrations and issues which arise in the workplace.

Education/vocational skills

We work closely with the women to explore suitable courses for them to enhance their employment opportunities. The community offers a range of computer courses, along with literacy and language courses.

Women can attend Tafe to upgrade their basic education, or do full-time courses in their chosen area of study. Women can also attend university, and have usually commenced this course prior to transferring to the TC. A strong emphasis is placed on facilitating enrolment/re-enrolment at these institutions prior to release, should enrolment coincide with their release date.

Opportunities for traineeships are also explored and at the moment we have the only Koori woman in the state involved in the Bunnabee Mura program, a program set up specifically for Koori inmates. This program consists of traineeships in horticulture, which are portable post-release to both metropolitan and rural areas.

Additionally, with the help of Centrelink, we have been able to place two women who have English as a second language on Tafe courses designed to provide education and work experience, paying particular attention to language difficulties.

The Centre also provides computers on site and sewing machines, for those who wish to maintain or learn these skills.

Financial Management

These skills are often included in pre-release programs, but their relevance is diminished by the limited opportunities to apply budgeting and other skills. At the Transitional Centre the women are allowed to open and operate their bank accounts, under strict financial protocols. This means that when they are released, the bank account is already established, and for those who have served a long sentence, there is the opportunity to become accustomed to ATMs and also of course, to standing in queues. Trivial though these may seem, they are major experiences for some of our clients, which significantly assist their transition into society. One of our past residents who was in the last months of a six year sentence, when preparing herself for her first trip to the bank said, “but if they make me wait I’ll just walk out.” We then had to work with her to help her explore other ways of dealing with this situation.

Developing and adhering to a budget are conditions of having access to operating a bank account. They are also integral components of the case plan at the TC. Having adequate savings when released is not the only end in itself, many offenders released from gaol have saved money, simply because in many cases they did not have direct access to their money, which is passive participation in saving. What is of major importance to the women at the TC is not just the amount they save, but that they have achieved this through active participation in the process. This is a powerful experience for them as many had thought themselves
incapable of saving.

A financial counsellor attends regularly to assist the women in identifying and resolving their financial problems. Many of them have outstanding debts, unpaid fines and civil compensation claims against them. This counsellor also develops a post-release budget with the women immediately prior to release; for while they pay board to the Centre, this amount does not realistically reflect the cost of rent, food, electricity, gas, telephone rental, vehicle maintenance and cleaning and other utilities which the Centre provides. Preparing the women for reality is critical to their transition.

Ever since the Centre came on line over four years ago, the women themselves have been consistently unanimous in their praise of this initiative.

"Initially Charlene was given a one year sentence and three months after getting out was back into crime. This time around she claims to be better equipped after time at the centre"

"When I came here, I nearly fell over trying to deal with all the irresponsibility......having a real job saving money .......was a real shock......If you don’t have a bank account then you don’t know where to go and how to start.” (Parramatta Advertiser, March 2000)

"I must admit that when I first arrived at the TC I thought Fantastic work, money, spending but then you came along and put the dreaded words BUDGET and SAVING, ...........but today .....I have a fully furnished unit and a chance at life again.” (A message from Anna at the time of her release).

Northcott’s paper also identifies “finding assistance with financial problems”, as an area of concern. (Getting Out: Women Prisoners’ View of their Training Needs, p.164).

General living skills

These encompass a range of skills and tasks, but I would like to focus on shopping for the groceries and general nutrition, because at the TC these are integral components of the women’s responsibilities.

“The residents will plan with the Manager for the provision of food and household commodities and will undertake the shopping themselves (Management Plan p. 7).

The women in each house have to compile the weekly shopping list and are rostered to go with a TCW to a supermarket in a nearby shopping centre. An amount of money is allocated as an upper limit, which should not be confused with having to spend every cent. The objective of shopping at the Centre is to teach the women to shop as if they were managing for themselves outside. In this way we hope to reinforce reality checks for the women in terms of what items, brand names and so on they really can afford and also give them practice in choosing alternatives when some items are too costly.
Compilation of the shopping list also enables the staff to observe whose needs are not being met. It gives us an insight into house dynamics and any covert racism. The issues of who cooks and cleans also alert us to possible problems so we can work with the women to address these. This might involve working with an individual or working with the group as a whole.

The granting of privileges hinges in part, on the women’s participation in the above. Staff rosters are organised to ensure that all women take their turn at the weekly shopping. Problems which arise from the shopping are referred to the house representative, and if not immediately resolved, may be placed on the agenda of their next house meeting.

As with any residential sharing, problems constantly arise, and an easy way would be to buy the groceries in bulk and appoint someone to do the cooking. However it is precisely because these issues do present challenges that we persevere. And it is an area which should be addressed pre-release. Shand refers to development of life skills in her paper (p.20), while the inmates in Northcott’s paper also identified a need for these skills:

- “Allow prisoners to spend time outside to get used to spending money and new costings.” (P.166).

Families and Children

The detrimental effect of imprisonment on family life is well-documented and clearly identified in research on female inmates (Pollock, p100). Pollock also cites studies linking the maintenance of family ties to a reduction in recidivism. The TC actively encourages contact with families, and allocates liberal visiting hours to facilitate this.

Residents at the TC also participate in the Mothers’ and Children’s Program which allows selected women to have their pre-school children reside with them full-time, and for older children to spend weekends and school holidays with them. The TC works with the women, encouraging them to reunite and rebond with their children. Pregnant women are supported in their pre-natal program and we have established strong links with the Early Childhood Centre in Parramatta.

The Centre has also been able to facilitate contact for some mothers with school counsellors, both in metropolitan and rural areas, and has helped arrange joint counselling sessions with the women and their children; including adolescent children. Imprisonment raises significant issues and problems for the women and their children. Engaging in constructive communication prior to release is at least a start to problem solving and to healing family relationships. Difficulties can arise for women who speak little English, but we have been successful in locating suitable programs in the community. We also work with identified Aboriginal workers both in the Department and in the community, for Koori women who reside at the Centre.

The women attend parenting and other support programs in the community. They also take their children to activities and day care. The TC is ideally placed in terms of its location and its operations for children and mothers/carers to participate in community activities and programs.
This program generates so many positives, but two instances over the last four years spring to mind. One woman’s eight year old child lived in a country area; she was completing a six year sentence and had seen him only twice. Although apprehensive she asked him to stay with her for some of the school holidays, which changed how she viewed her whole relationship with that boy, enabling her to regain confidence and status as a parent and make positive post-release plans for ongoing contact with him.

Another woman, from a non-English speaking background had three children who lived interstate. She saved enough money for their airfares and brought them down during school holidays. When they arrived at the airport she did not even recognise the youngest, a three year old. Yet this woman was a single parent who would resume custody of her children, whom she intended to relocate to New South Wales. She achieved all this and has now successfully completed a two years six months’ parole period.

The presence of Aboriginal women and their children at the Centre is a reminder of the consequences of past policies which have left “scars...the equivalent of a genetic imprint, which will leave their mark on generations to come” (speech at official opening).

The Centre has been able to facilitate attendance at joint counselling sessions for the women and their partners, which begins the process of open communication and provides a forum to address underlying issues in the relationship. We have also encouraged joint counselling for same sex relationships.

Welfare and Counselling issues

The most critical welfare issues relate to accommodation and access to government benefits. The women participate actively with the worker in both these areas. They interact directly with housing agencies and Centrelink, And importantly, they are gaining this knowledge and experience prior to release. The Centre also supports and advocates for them.

The women are encouraged to attend other agencies in the community which deal with issues such as counselling for alcohol and other drug abuse, gambling, grief issues, sexual abuse, and domestic violence. The woman must always initiate her own referral to these agencies.

In addition particular community groups conduct programs which address issues of health and well being, communication and other relevant topics.

Community work and recreation

Involving the women in community work is a priority, and we have developed a rapport with a number of such agencies particularly in relation to differently-abled groups in the community.

Recreational pursuits are also actively encouraged, to promote an awareness of the need to balance work and leisure. Again, the women attend groups in the community for physical activities and hobbies. Connie, whom we quoted earlier in the paper, attended a creative writing course. Engaging in recreational activities and hobbies also provides a positive alternative to negative addictive habits. The issues of leisure and spare time are also identified
by the women surveyed in Northcott’s paper (p. 164).

All of the above, employment and education, financial management, children and families, general living skills, welfare and counselling and community work and recreation, cost the TC little more than our wages and telephone bills and of course, education fees. But the benefits they provide to the women are considerable. As a community-based facility, the TC is able to give the women the experience of living and working in the community and normalising their lives as much as possible prior to their release.

**On-site programs**

Identifying programs with immediate relevance to this transitional stage of the women's sentences was one of our greatest challenge, particularly as our target group comprises such a small number of women. Often we see a need for information and/or skills development which the women claim they have addressed as they have completed such programs at various points in their sentences. But as the effectiveness of a program is linked to the immediacy of its application, we are challenged with ways of presenting these programs in a different format, so for example, communications may have to be reinvented as “Conducting Meetings” which includes additional skills, but can also focus on communication skills. And conducting meetings is immediately relevant to the women’s responsibilities at the TC.

On-site programs this year include home maintenance, presentation skills, a meditation course and Wyse-Up, a program developed by women in gaol for women in gaol in conjunction with a health worker. Our next program will be conducted by the Restorative Justice Unit, will involve non-violent offenders against property. Our past programs include First Aid, Conducting Meetings and Job Seeking Skills. Our future programs will include nutrition, and a new program we hope to develop with the women based on anticipated problems which past residents have shared with us at the time of their release.

**Community acceptance and involvement**

One of the most rewarding aspects of this community-based centre is the involvement with and by, the community. We have developed a rapport with many agencies in the greater Parramatta area and our women have responded positively and constructively to the benefits gained by working with these agencies. Furthermore, staff from these agencies have worked with us in presenting on-site programs; and the local community college applied for, and was granted, joint funding by the departments of Education and Corrective Services, to trial a range of programs. This has helped us to make informed judgements on what kinds of subject areas we should focus on, but of course, as stated earlier, on-site programs need to be dynamic in order to be effective.

Deserving of particular mention is the Management Committee, This Committee is an integral component of the Management Plan to “monitor the progress of the residents and management practices of the centre and provide a link to the centre’s neighbourhood and the wider Parramatta area” (p. 4). That being a member of this committee is a positive experience is evidenced by the consistent attendance at meetings and the level of interest shown, by the community representatives, all of whom volunteer their time to attend the Centre after hours.
For our part this committee is regarded as one of the highlights of our Centre because it not only fulfils the functions as set out above, but it also allows for the community to work with corrections, providing greater insights into the problems which often alienate corrections from the community.

Also, the community committee members themselves bring a range of expertise and knowledge to the centre, and at the moment include an educator, a woman also involved with juvenile issues for young women, a community alcohol and other drug counsellor and a real estate agent. In the past it has also included women from health and legal backgrounds.

Importantly, the two house representatives at the Centre are also on this committee, which allows them to participate in the management of the Centre at a more sophisticated level.

Statistics

Since we opened in September 1996:

- 99 women have been accommodated at the Centre; 20 are current residents
- 68 have been released to parole
- 1 has returned to custody in the NSW system (1998).
- 7 have been returned to mainstream for breaches, 2 because of management problems and two because of incorrect assessment
- 28 have had their children reside with them including 5 current residents
- total of 70 had gained employment at some level including 17 current residents who are employed
- 49 were actively engaged in education/vocational training which includes 7 current residents.

The age range of 22 to 62 years gives an average age of 36 while the average stay is 9 months, with some staying up to eighteen months, and others serving only three or four months.

Their offences encompass a wide range approximating the following percentages:

- fraud and other non-violent crimes against property 29%
- import and supply and other offences committed for financial gain 24%
- offences pertaining to drug abuse such as armed robbery, steal from person, break and enter and import/supply 31%
- murder, attempt murder, manslaughter and kidnap 13%
- accessory after the fact 3%

Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islanders together with other aboriginal women account for 14% of the total number of residents since 1996, while women with English as a second language account for 28%.

Does the Centre make a difference?

While we know that only one woman has returned to custody in New South Wales, the formal
evaluation of the Centre is still being conducted, so no findings can be presented at this conference. What we do know anecdotally is that the women benefit noticeably from this transitional period. Staff and visitors from other Centres who had prior involvement with the women comment on how much confidence the women have gained. Families also comment on this, and frequently tell us how positive this time has been for the woman and the family. Employers, hesitant at first, give positive feedback. We must be one of the few Centres which is offered more positions than we can fill. We pass these on to other sections of the Department, which has resulted in women from the mainstream finding employment.

We also know that the role played by our Probation and Parole Service cannot be underestimated; there have been many times when we have received information from friends, employers, or other sources which we have passed on to this Service, so that immediate action can be taken to try to prevent a revocation of parole. We have always worked closely with our allocated parole officers, and are at the moment consolidating our working relationship with the probation officers in the community by addressing staff meetings and reinforcing the Centre as the link between incarceration and supervision. We provide this service with copies of our exit interviews with our clients, which identify areas of concern post-release from the perspectives of both the staff and the women.

Significantly, in over four years the motivation and enthusiasm of the staff has never diminished, if anything, it continues to grow. As stated earlier, this Centre has low levels of sick leave and a nil overtime return. This motivation and enthusiasm are critical factors in maintaining our level of service to the women at this stressful time. Neither in over four years has any offender applied to return to the mainstream of corrections. And yet, benign though the Centre and its ambience appear, the women are told at their induction that this component of their sentences will present them with their most difficult challenges to date.

Conclusion

Pending the publication of the results of the evaluation it seems reasonable to assume that some things must be working at the Parramatta Transitional Centre. The Centre's organisational and staffing structure allows it to function as an autonomous body with personnel dedicated to the requirements of the Centre's operations. This autonomy, together with support from the hierarchy, has encouraged the implementation of creative and innovative initiatives.

It has also consolidated a management framework based upon teamwork, consistency and professionalism. A system of case management which clearly defines roles and boundaries, and assists the women to develop their own solutions to their problems and situations allows them to work towards genuine empowerment. The application of living skills to the reality of community living is an invaluable experience for these women; they can engage with the problems of accommodation, families and children, employment, finance and ongoing health issues prior to their release during this transition period.

The willingness of the local community to work with the Centre in establishing both pre- and post-release supports is a critical factor in transition (Shand, pp 20-21) and also in the deinstitutionalisation of female offenders. Participatory management by resident
representatives and members of the community has allowed the women to participate in the management of the Centre at a more sophisticated level which has resulted in a partnership between staff and residents to maintain the integrity of the Centre and its programs, while simultaneously providing the community with the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and the confidence to take ownership of corrections.

When these women take their final step across the bridge from corrections to the community their status as individuals has been restored and they are better equipped to resume their place in society as responsible citizens. Just as crossing a bridge is safer than stumbling into a void, release from the Parramatta Transitional Centre provides a safer passage for female offenders reintegrating into society.
REFERENCES


