Young Adult Offender Strategic Framework 2007-2009
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ANNEXURE B

Implementation of Key Elements 2007-2009

2007
- Stakeholder discussions on the development and implementation of a Young Adult Female Offenders Program
- Young Adult Offender Booklet developed and published
- Satellite Program delivered at Bathurst and Mid North Coast Correctional Centre
- Young adult women offenders participate in Gurnang Life Challenge
- Evaluation and research on the effectiveness of the Specialised Program

2008
- Care in Placement Program
- Satellite Program at Mid-West Correctional Centre (Wellington) and two additional centres
- Young Adult Female Offenders Program implemented
- Audit of Specialised Program
- Review of Young Adult Offender Handbook
- Continuation of research on the Specialised Program
- Development of a Satellite Program Facilitators Course

2009
- Development of a new Young Adult Offender Strategic Framework (2010-2012)
- Continuation of Satellite Program at nominated centres
- Review of Young Adult Offender Handbook
- Review and audit of Young Adult Female Offenders Program
- Continuation of research on the Specialised Program

A WORD FROM THE COMMISSIONER

In NSW, young adult offenders in custody represent 20 percent of the total correctional centre population. Research clearly indicates that those in this 18-25 age group have greater levels of recidivism and commit more offences in custody than other sections of the offender population.

These demographics illustrate the social and economic importance of addressing the dynamic risk factors common to most young adult offenders, including impulsive behaviour, high levels of substance abuse, vulnerability to negative peer pressure, and poor decision making skills.

Since 1991, the Young Offenders Program, the forerunner of the Specialised Program for Young Adult Males has been delivering a unique combination of program interventions to address these needs. The continuing success of the program has maintained the Department's position at the forefront of young adult offender management within Australia.

This Young Adult Offender Strategic Framework 2007-2009 aligns with the NSW State Plan 2007-2017 which aims to reduce by 10 percent the proportion of offenders who reoffend within 24 months of conviction. Over the 3 year period covered by this framework more attention will be given to management of young adult offenders on community based orders and in particular the transition of offenders from custody to community.

I recommend this Framework as an important feature of the continuing commitment of the NSW Department of Corrective Services to cost effective management of this challenging group of offenders and for improved longer term outcomes for community safety.

Ron Woodham
Commissioner
29th May 2007
3.2 Issues facing young adult offenders

Young adults in custody generally experience problems in one or more of the following areas:

- Obtaining employment upon release;
- Peer group pressure;
- Obtaining accommodation upon release;
- Motivation and self-direction;
- Accepting personal responsibility for their behaviour and its consequences;
- Social skills – (difficulties with relationships, communication, controlling anger and frustration);
- Low self image which can lead to depression and suicide/self harm ideation;
- Accessing educational and community-based programs;
- Feeling isolated from mainstream society;
- Inability to constructively engage in leisure pursuits;
- Gambling; and
- Substance abuse.

4.8 Staff participation in the management of young adult offenders

Managing young adult offenders can be a very rewarding experience. However, the Department does not underestimate the inherent difficulties of working with what can be a volatile section of the offender population. Staff members need to be aware of the issues with which young adult offenders present and apply the appropriate management response to that particular situation. The Young Adult Offender’s course at the Corrective Services Academy provides background information and practical measures necessary to effectively manage offenders in this age group.

In addition, the two-hour Young Adult Offender information session delivered at the Academy to trainee custodial staff will assist probationary officers to identify and manage the needs of young adult offenders. Further, while training for staff members assisting in the delivery of satellite programs will mainly be on-site, it is planned to develop a centralised training program in 2008.
Future satellite program development will focus on working with relevant Departmental staff to ensure that the following Departmental services are available to Young Adult Offenders in a format that best provides for their specific needs:

- Educational assessments;
- Employment training and practice;
- Involving families, where appropriate, in the offenders rehabilitation;
- Social skills training;
- Developmental training, including, but not limited to, planning and personal responsibility;
- Effective use of recreation;
- AOD and gambling issues;
- Transitional program training including financial management; and
- Pre Release preparation.

The Department offers a suite of programs (Compendium of Programs), in conjunction with the Specialised Program interventions, which are used to meet the identified needs of young offenders. In addition, the Work Readiness Program caters for work skills preparation. Similarly, the educational assessment and programs provided by the Department's Adult Education and Vocational Training Institute (AEVTI) and the educational assessment processes undertaken by them are appropriate for this group of offenders. The additional focus provided by the satellite Young Adult Offender Program will, in effect, bring the Specialised Program interventions to non-specialised centres.

Satellite Programs in 2007
The two nominated centres for the delivery of a satellite program in 2007 are Bathurst, and the Mid North Coast (MNCCC).

4.6 Research on young adult offenders who have completed the specialised program

Community Offender Services (COS) is responsible for providing advice to sentencing, releasing authorities and managing offenders in the community. The Service currently manages an average of 17,000 offenders at any one time. Gathering data on young adults who graduate from the Specialised Program and who are released to community orders will provide valuable information on the effectiveness of the interventions used in the program to reduce recidivism rates of young adult offenders. The data collected can be considered in light of previous similar research projects, so that meaningful comparisons on the recidivism rates of young adult offenders can be made.

4.7 Continuing research into young adult offenders management in other jurisdictions

Whilst there is a continuing need to monitor and evaluate what is the largest young adult offender program in Australia, it is also important to conduct research at a national and international level so that new and innovative methods of managing young adult offenders can be examined. Appropriately directed research produces information that practitioners can apply to increase the effectiveness of their work roles. Research can also validate programming strategies, besides identifying the constraints under which staff work.

4. KEY ELEMENTS OF THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

4.1 Publishing a Young Adult Offender Handbook in 2007

It is essential that incarcerated young adult offenders are informed of the programs available specifically for them. The Young Adult Offender Handbook will be distributed to all centres and contain information on:

- The Specialised Program;
- Satellite programs;
- Care in Placement Program;
- Young Adult Female Offender Program; and
- Programs which address identified criminogenic needs, including information related to programs availability to all offenders under the care and control of the Department as listed in the Department's Compendium of Programs.

4.2 Implementing a Young Adult Female Offender Program in 2008

One of the key initiatives of the Strategic Framework is the development of a program for young adult female offenders. The number of women in the criminal justice system continues to increase, and those aged under 25 years of age also reflect high recidivism rates and offences in custody incidences. At this time there are 113 young adult women offenders in custody which represents 17% of female offenders. The development of a program for young female offenders is essential if both recidivism and centre based offences are to be reduced. Current literature suggests that it may be necessary to modify programs for women offenders to address their particular needs.

Characteristics of Female Offenders

Females in custody will generally present with some or all of the following characteristics in comparison with male inmates:

- Increased likelihood of experiencing depression, other mental health issues, and negative body image;
- High levels of substance abuse/dual diagnoses;
- High incidences of multiple health concerns;
- Increased rates of sexual and physical victimisation as children;
- History of unhealthy and co-dependent relationships;
- Sentence is generally shorter though more frequent;
- A lack of connectivity to community and social isolation;
- Dependent children/primary carers; and
- Difficulty finding accommodation.

For young female offenders, these characteristics can be more pronounced, given their age and general lack of positive life experiences.
In 2007, the State Coordinator, Young Adult Offender Programs, will begin a series of discussions with key stakeholders regarding the development and implementation of a gender-specific program to address the needs of young female offenders.

### 4.3 Implementing a Care in Placement Program in 2008

Care in Placement figures over the past 5 years have consistently reflected 22 percent of the offender population being managed within this category. Offenders in Care in Placement comprise of Special Management Area Program (SMA), Protection Limited Association (PLA), and Protection Non Association (PNA). In 2007 statistics show 204 offenders in Care in Placement, 658 of whom are identified as young adult offenders. Given the program delivery difficulties associated with offenders in this category, a two-stage Care in Placement program linking Junee and Kirkconnell Correctional Centres will take place in 2008.

The purpose of the program will be to:
- Provide an opportunity for male offenders aged under 25 who are in Care in Placement to participate in a young adult offender-specific program;
- Evaluate the effectiveness of Adventure Based Experiential Learning for this group;
- Address the dynamic risk factors of participants; and
- Reduce the incidences of negative behaviour.

### 4.4 Monitoring the effectiveness of the Specialised Program

The Specialised Program is the foundation on which the Department bases many of the key elements within the Strategic Framework. Research indicates that young adult offenders participating in the Specialised Program in NSW Department of Corrective Services have lower rates of recidivism than those unable to attend the program. As offenders progress through the specialised centres more responsibility and, therefore, accountability is placed on them. Program interventions take account of the individual's needs and also reflect community standards, values and expectations. Given the Specialised Program's pivotal role in the Strategic Framework, it is essential that centres in which the program is delivered continue to maintain a high standard of program and service delivery. To this end, the State Coordinator, Young Adult Offender Programs is to liaise with the Oberon Manager, Offender Services and Programs (Coordinator, Specialised Program) to ensure regular reviews of the Specialised Program are conducted.

### 4.5 Continuing with the roll out of satellite programs

**Rationale**

The Specialised Program is internationally recognised for its innovative and effective approach to managing young male adult offenders. However, less than 10 per cent of incarcerated young male adults in the NSW correctional system can participate in all stages of the program. The main reasons for this are:

(a) Oberon accommodates only 130 offenders, with a proportion employed as adult nucleus offenders, in domestic duties, or working in bush gangs. Even if Oberon's population of young adult offenders were to double, it would still mean 1500 young adults would be unable to participate in this stage of the Specialised Program.

(b) Many young adult male offenders do not meet the criteria for the Specialised Program. This includes offenders who are:
- Serving sentences of four months or less;
- Currently on methadone/buprenorphine;
- On Care in Placement;
- Classified A or B1;
- Psychologically unstable;
- Suffering from a mental illness;
- Registered as having an Intellectual Disability with the State-wide Disability Services, requiring special placement; and
- Medically unfit.

(c) It is difficult, and not always appropriate, to relocate young adult offenders from different regional locations. The proximity of significant others and local community services are important rehabilitative factors, and must be considered when deciding whether to place the young adult offender on the Specialised Program. Linking close community and family support to a young adult-specific program targeting the individual's dynamic risk factors will usually be the best course of action.

**Purpose**

Satellite programs are the result of recommendations arising from the Young Adult Offender Review 2003-2004, which proposed that shortened versions of the interventions used in the Specialised Program should be piloted in non-specialised centres, and if successful, would then become a central component of the Strategic Framework. These streamlined yet intensive interventions, varying in duration from 6-16 days, were piloted at John Morony I, Lithgow and Parklea Correctional Centres as well as Kariong Juvenile Correctional Centre. The satellite program's purpose is to:
- Increase numbers of offenders participating in the Young Adult Offender Program;
- Reduce misconducts in gaol;
- Begin to address dynamic risk factors;
- Instil motivation to work;
- Increase ability to find work;
- Establish and maintain positive work habits;
- Increase personal effectiveness and growth;
- Improve interpersonal and communication skills; and
- Introduce young adults to problem-solving techniques.

The pilot program evaluations from all four centres showed that three to six months after the program's delivery the low level of misconducts experienced during the course of the program continued to be maintained by the participants. Also, offender participation in other programs provided by the centre had increased.