



Evaluation of the Women and Mentoring Program

Final Report

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Executive Summary

The Women and Mentoring Program (WaM), a two-year Pilot initiated in 2009 by The Wellington Collingwood Inc., created a unique, viable and important program model to support women charged with an offence. It provides a significant contribution to knowledge about 'what works' in gender-specific crime prevention strategies.

This report discusses in detail how the pilot:

- ♦ Made a significant positive difference to the female offenders' confidence, coping mechanisms and capacity to respond to their legal matters
- ♦ Trained and resourced volunteer mentors to provide appropriate support to the participants, to share their skills and contribute to the wider community
- ♦ Gained the support of the magistrate, police and lawyers by providing a referral option that supported the efficiency of the justice system

The Wellington initiated the WaM pilot program in response to the identified need for new forms of community support for women in the initial stages of contact with the criminal justice system, particularly in the period following the laying of charges and prior to appearing in court – an often isolating and stressful time. Women follow distinctive pathways to criminality, and tend to represent a lower-risk, higher-needs offender group than men. The social and economic implications of women's imprisonment are far-reaching. Crime prevention strategies and supports for women are therefore a logical response, and mentoring is an appropriate and empowering support strategy.

The *Evaluation of the Women and Mentoring Program* report discusses in detail the aims, process and outcomes of the pilot and evaluation. The report outlines the evaluation methodology; presents the context for the program; documents the Women and Mentoring model; discusses the evaluation findings and presents conclusions and recommendations.

The report concludes:

- ♦ The two-year testing phase of the pilot shows it has developed a viable model for operation, one that has gained support based on the positive impacts for participants and the reduced number of breaches, non-appearances and unprepared appearances.
- ♦ The participants are enthusiastic supporters of the program.
- ♦ Running the program offers considerable efficiency when compared to the cost of *not* running the program, considering both the resources saved in compliance with legal requirements and the significant expenditure per prisoner. For example, it costs almost \$90,000 to keep a prisoner for one year; if the program prevents two women for entering prison for nine months it has paid for itself.

To have greater certainty about the robustness of the model would require further time and monitoring of participants. As such, the 'pilot' represents a strong case for moving to a 'program' retaining this unique model. There is great potential for the pilot to grow by targeting other offender groups, and expanding beyond the Yarra area. The pilot now needs to move to a stronger infrastructure base to give it greater strength to continue.



Summary of Findings

Finding 1:

Based on the literature scan and the advice of key informants, the Women and Mentoring program represents a unique model of a crime prevention program for women in Australia¹, and potentially internationally. On this basis alone, the Women and Mentoring pilot is significant and represents a significant opportunity to contribute to our learning about 'what works' in terms of gender-specific crime prevention strategies.

Finding 2:

The rationale for the Women and Mentoring Program is consistent with criminological research that shows men and women have different patterns of criminal behaviour and pathways to crime, and that gender-specific programs are required to respond to the distinctive needs of female offenders.

Finding 3:

The Women and Mentoring Operations Manual (October 2011) outlines the program's aims and objectives, history, principles, development, governance, management, administration and evaluation. It provides a clear explanation of its approach to mentoring and the recommended model of interacting with mentors and participants. Policies are outlined for the program management. Included with the Operations Manual are template documents (eg. Mentor Code of Conduct) and forms (eg. Code of Conduct, Assessment check list) that support standardised and consistent practice.

The Operations Manual lacks detail in some areas which need to be addressed (as outlined under 'Areas for improvement' on p.24).

Most importantly, the Operations Manual lacks a system and tools for the overall evaluation and monitoring of the program. This is essential for building the program's knowledge and evidence base.

Finding 4:

The Women and Mentoring program requires a sound governance model and clear articulation of the program's rationale, aims, objectives, policies and procedures, given the importance of the duty of care and potential risk issues. The Women and Mentoring pilot experienced some challenges from a governance perspective during its development, mainly due to some lack of clarity around key processes. However, these 'grey areas' have been addressed and there is a shared confidence that the pilot has developed a strong model.

¹ The Court Integrated Services Program (CISP), in operation at three Victorian magistrates' courts: Melbourne, Sunshine and Latrobe Valley, targets clients (male and female) at a similar point in the justice system. However, this is a formal program, operating on a case management model. While there are some parallels, the differences are also significant, particularly in that this program is the formal provision of services, rather than an informal support mechanism, provided on a voluntary basis.



Finding 5:

The Women and Mentoring program's mentoring approach is sound and is consistent with most good practice principles for maximising the crime prevention outcomes from mentoring projects for young people, as outlined by the National Community Crime Prevention Programme and general good practice principles for mentoring.

Processes for closure and/or termination of mentoring relationships could be further developed.

The program has developed a referral relationship with VACRO, which enables mentoring pairs to be voluntarily transferred to that organisation in the event a participant receives a custodial sentence. This is an example of the Women and Mentoring model contributing to new understandings of good practice principles for women's mentoring programs using this community-based approach.

Finding 6:

The most significant strength of the Women and Mentoring pilot program is that a unique program model has been developed to support women charged with an offence and that this model has been shown to be viable.

Finding 7:

The most common charge faced by participants of the Women and Mentoring pilot program is theft. The women participating in the program are also dealing with a complex constellation of factors, consistent with the findings of the literature, with issues ranging from drug and alcohol, mental health, family violence, poor physical health, drug and financial hardship. Seven of the eleven participants have – between them – twelve children (under the age of 18). Six of these children are currently in care, generally of extended family members.

Finding 8:

The Women and Mentoring pilot program has received referrals from all anticipated referral sources: police, community lawyers, other services providers and self-referrals.

The pilot has found it challenging ensuring that police (at the three local police stations) are aware of, and referring to, the program.

However, the program has had unanticipated success with referrals from community lawyers. Community lawyers have seen a direct correlation between program participation and improvements in client compliance with court-based orders. This has provided the incentive to refer further clients to the program.

Finding 9:

The Women and Mentoring pilot program has recruited around twelve mentors over its two years of operation, in two intakes. The program has been promoted in a range of sources (eg. volunteer websites, local newspapers) as well as word of mouth. Mentors come from a range of professional and non-



professional backgrounds, from the local area and from outside the local area, including a regional centre. Motivations for joining the program also vary, but most have a clear understanding that they are in a position to share their skills and make a contribution.

Finding 10:

The Women and Mentoring pilot program provides appropriate supports to mentors through induction and training, ongoing training and meetings, one-to-one support and support for critical incidents.

Mentors are trained and resourced to provide appropriate support to participants. Mentors typically support participants to prepare for and attend court hearings and other support services. They also assist participants with day-to-day matters (eg. childcare arrangements, Centrelink appointments) and with informal support. The process for providing this support is negotiated by each pair. It may involve transporting a client to appointments, meeting them at the appointment, having a coffee together or talking on the phone.

Finding 11:

The Women and Mentoring program has found that building knowledge of the program amongst the local referral network 'takes time'. Promotion of the program requires written promotional material (hard copy and electronic), reinforced by regular, direct contact with stakeholders in the local network (eg. police, lawyers, the court, other service providers) and support from management.

Finding 12:

The Women and Mentoring program has operated through four grants sourced from three philanthropic trusts and one small government grant. These funds have been supplemented by two anonymous donations. A further grant was awarded for the evaluation research.

Securing and managing funding from a range of sources has created an additional workload for the program that inevitably diverts resources away from program delivery. Lack of secure funding also hampers the capacity to engage mentors and participants and promote the program with any certainty.

Given the level of uncertainty that the program encountered in its first year of operation, the achievements of the program are significant. The program experience underscores the need to secure funding which covers the full implementation costs and enables the program to operate with certainty.

Finding 13:

The Women and Mentoring pilot has delivered significant benefits to participants, supporting its original hypothesis that building participants' capacity and confidence through mentoring may enable participants to 'manage and move on from the issues that underpin offending behaviours.' Long term outcomes of the pilot are not yet available, but the short and medium results show that this program can make a significant difference to female offenders' capacity to respond to their legal matters, and their coping mechanisms more broadly. The benefits of changes made by participants have also been shown to flow through children and families.



Just as other research has shown the 'distinctly gendered nature' of women's experience of prison or transition from prison, the experience of this program shows the distinctly gendered nature of women's contact with the justice system. In addition to their charge, all participants were experiencing one or more significant issues in their lives – mental health, addictions, intimate partner violence, financial hardship – significantly reducing their capacity to cope with their legal issues. Most lacked supportive or constructive relationships and in some cases were extremely socially isolated. Most who were parents were sole parents, often concerned about protecting their children from further exposure to violence. The mentoring 'friend with boundaries' has been able to provide support to participants, whatever their circumstances, in a manner that is non-judgmental, encouraging and empowering.

Finding 14:

The combination of costs saved through more efficient processing of offences and avoidance of re-issuing of warrants, reduced number of non-attendances at court or meetings with lawyers, reduced number of deferred hearings, greater compliance with orders, reduced severity of sentencing, avoidance of custodial sentences as well as costs saved through better functioning of individuals and their families, indicate that the required investment in the program is minimal in relation to its benefits.



Recommendations

The following recommendations inform the next steps for the pilot program and possible future directions. The recommendations have been informed by the evaluation data and a specific workshop conducted by the evaluators with the Women and Mentoring Pilot Program Steering Committee to discuss the options for future directions for the pilot project.

On this basis, it is recommended that:

1. The pilot Women and Mentoring program is formally concluded, with a public celebration that acknowledges the program's achievements for participants, mentors and the local service system. The significant contribution of the pilot to the knowledge base of effective interventions for women in the justice system should also be celebrated and acknowledged.
2. The evaluation findings and report are used for providing the case for moving from a 'pilot' to a 'program'. Funding should be sought at realistic levels (at least \$125–\$150,000 per annum) for a period of at least two years to ensure that program operation is not distracted by the need to source further funds. Partners should have the capacity to contribute to the operation of the program.
3. A working party is established immediately to implement Recommendation 2. As one of its first tasks, the working party should develop a six-month action plan to secure funding for the program. The working party should ensure that this momentum is maintained, so that the goodwill, involvement and expertise of the mentors is retained.
4. Interim responsibility for the current active participant group is to be transferred to VACRO. VACRO will provide support to mentors and participants during the transition period from pilot to program.
5. Developmental work to the model be undertaken to include program logic, monitoring and evaluation framework and tools so as to increase the model's application.
6. The Women and Mentoring model is documented so that the important learnings about this unique approach add to the knowledge base of the women and justice field and are promoted to key interest groups: the judiciary, the legal fraternity, the police, community services, the health promotion sector and evaluation professionals. This knowledge should be shared through articles in academic journals, professional journals, conference presentations and mainstream press.
7. A media promotion strategy on the Women and Mentoring program be developed to promote the achievements and benefits of the program. The promotion strategy to provide promotional material to assist in targeting potential funding opportunities. (See Attachment 4 for an example of a draft mainstream press article, using the 'Two of Us' approach.)
8. The Wellington Inc undertakes strategic work to develop a consortium of local partners. The purpose of the consortium is two-fold: to provide greater infrastructure support to the program, and secondly, to work with CALD-specific agencies and programs, in particular agencies working with women from groups who are over-represented in the justice system.



Introduction

The Women and Mentoring Program (WAM) was established in 2009 by The Wellington Collingwood Inc, a not-for-profit, community-based organisation in Collingwood. The program was established as a two-year action research pilot project.

The Women and Mentoring Program aims to provide a new form of community support to women living in the City of Yarra, charged with an offence in the City of Yarra and entering the criminal justice system in this municipality.

Effective Change Pty Ltd was engaged by The Wellington in June 2011 to undertake an evaluation of the Women and Mentoring Program. This report presents the findings of the evaluation.

Program History

The Women and Mentoring program was established in response to research conducted in 2008 – *Justice and Community Support for Women*² – that identified the need for new forms of community support for women in the initial stages of contact with the criminal justice system, particularly in the period following the laying of charges and appearances before the courts. The research found that women in this position are often very isolated and lack essential knowledge of both the legal system and the existing community supports to assist. Further, the period of time before their court appearances can be both stressful and unsettling. A new mentoring program was recommended to address these difficulties as a complement to existing services.

The recommendation to establish a new local community women's mentoring program was noted by The Wellington. The Wellington led a group of interested parties in a successful bid to gain initial funding from the Myer Foundation.³

The two-year pilot commenced in November 2009. It is supported by the Neighbourhood Justice Centre (NJC) which provides offices for the project, by Victoria Police, the City of Yarra, Fitzroy Community Legal Centre, the Victorian Association for the Care and Rehabilitation of Offenders (VACRO), the Department of Justice, an advisor on Women and Justice issues and representatives of The Wellington.

Context for the Evaluation

The Women and Mentoring model being trialed in this pilot program is designed to test the hypothesis that the likelihood of re-offending will be reduced by early holistic mentor support during the period of the participants' encounters with the justice system and by, simultaneously over this period, working to build capacity and confidence to manage and move on from the issues that underpin offending behaviours.

² King, D and Davies, Dr S *Justice and Community Support for Women* (September, 2008)

³ The Wellington *Women and Mentoring Operations Manual* (October, 2011) p.1



Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of the Evaluation of the Women's Mentoring Program is to:

- ♦ Document the program model
- ♦ Evaluate the program impacts and outcomes
- ♦ Prepare a report on the evaluation project outcomes
- ♦ Disseminate the project findings

Structure of the Report

The report is presented in the following sections:

- ♦ An outline of the evaluation methodology
- ♦ Context, which presents an overview of literature around the themes of mentoring adult women in a justice context
- ♦ The Women and Mentoring model, describing the components of the model
- ♦ Discussion and evaluation findings
- ♦ Conclusions and recommendations



Methodology

Evaluation framework

An evaluation framework was developed to guide the evaluation (see Attachment 1). The evaluation framework was designed to elicit information about the:

- ♦ overall pilot program,
- ♦ program implementation, and
- ♦ program outcomes.

The key research questions for each program phase were:

Overall program

- ♦ Is there a clear rationale for the pilot program?
- ♦ Are the program's aims and objectives articulated?
- ♦ What are the strengths, weaknesses and critical success factors of the overall pilot model?
- ♦ How well is the program managed and coordinated?
- ♦ Is the program using best practice processes?
- ♦ Are there opportunities for sustainable improvements?
- ♦ How well is the model documented?
- ♦ Is the model replicable?

Implementation

- ♦ Is the program operating with an adequate level of resources? Are resources utilised efficiently?
- ♦ Is the program reaching mentees in the target group?
- ♦ Is the program reaching mentors?
- ♦ Are the right supports available for mentees and mentors, when and where required?
- ♦ How effective is the suitability assessment process? What improvements may be required?
- ♦ How well do the referral pathways operate? Has the program been effectively promoted?
- ♦ Are the referral pathways operating effectively?

Outcomes

- ♦ What has happened as a result of the program – intended and unintended outcomes – for mentees mentors / other stakeholders?
- ♦ How is the program viewed by key stakeholders?
- ♦ What is the 'drop out' rate from the program (mentees or mentors)?
- ♦ Do the successes / shortcomings of the program feed back into continuous improvement processes?
- ♦ How sustainable are the program outcomes – within current arrangements?
- ♦ How cost-effective is the program? What are the costs of running the program? What are the costs of *not* running the program?
- ♦ What, if any, have been the unintended outcomes of the program?



Information Collection

Information was collected using a mixed method approach, outlined below.

Semi-structured interviews, based on the key research questions were conducted with:

- ♦ Program coordinator (two interviews)
- ♦ Steering committee members and key stakeholders:
 - Ann Polis (Chair)
 - Carmel Benjamin (Advisor, Women and Justice)
 - Kerry Walker (Director, Neighbourhood Justice Centre (NJC))
 - Maryanne Clarke (Community Planner, Women's Health, City of Yarra)
 - Vi Lotter (Manager, Family, Children's Services and Women's Program, Victorian Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (VACRO))
 - Michael Keddle (Acting Sergeant, Richmond Police Station)
- ♦ Key informants including:
 - Senior Sergeant Jeffrey Parker (Victoria Police, original member of Steering Committee)
 - Craig Carney (Victorian Legal Aid)
 - Magistrate David Fanning (Magistrate, Neighbourhood Justice Centre)

Group discussions were conducted with:

- ♦ Women and Mentoring mentors
- ♦ Women and Mentoring Steering Committee

An on-line survey for participants was considered by the Project Manager and mentors, but this method was not suitable for all participants. Therefore, all participants were offered the option of a one to one interview with the evaluator. A letter explaining the process was provided to participants, through their mentor (see Attachment 2). Each mentor explained the proposed interview process with the participant. Four participants agreed to participate in a one-to-one interview. Three participant interviews were conducted at the Wellington Centre and one participant interview was conducted by phone.

Review of program documentation and records.

Scan of relevant national and international literature.

Data Synthesis and Analysis

Data collected from all sources was collated, synthesised, and analysed against the Women and Mentoring Evaluation Framework.



Draft and Final Reporting

The draft report was circulated to the Program Coordinators for distribution to the Steering Committee. Feedback from these stakeholders was addressed to finalise the report.



Context

Mentoring adult women in a justice context

'...the preponderance of research in the field clearly shows that gender has an effect in all the stages of the criminal justice system over and above other relevant factors...'

(Gender Differences in Sentencing Outcomes, State of Victoria, Sentencing Advisory Council, July 2010, p.63)

'Connection, not separation, is the guiding principle of growth for women.'

(The Relational Theory of Women's Psychological Development: Implications for the Criminal Justice System, Stephanie Covington, p.3)

Women in the justice system

Research on crime and criminal justice in Australia and internationally shows that women are less likely than men to be arrested, charged or imprisoned. With the exception of prostitution offences, men offend at much higher rates than women for all offence types.⁴ However, over the past 15 years there has been a steady increase in the number and proportion of women in Victorian prisons. Between 1995 and 2005, Victoria's female prison population more than doubled, with a population of around 260 in 2005, compared to just over 116 in 1995.⁵ Between 2006 and 2010, the number of female prisoners declined in the first three years, but between 2009 to 2010 rose again to a total population of 313 in 2010, a 28% increase over the five-year period.⁶

This general increase in female imprisonment over the past ten to fifteen years is consistent with national and international trends.⁷ Over the past 10 years, while the number of female prisoners in Australia has decreased, female incarceration is increasing at a faster rate than males, with females increasing by 35% compared to 29% for men.⁸

Men and women have different patterns of criminal behaviour:

- ♦ Women have less serious criminal histories than do men, with fewer prior convictions and less serious previous and current offending.⁹
- ♦ Of the 10,000 women arrested in Victoria in 2008 – 2009, most were arrested for theft from a shop (37.3%).¹⁰
- ♦ In 2005, breaches of non-custodial orders accounted for approximately one tenth of all women received into prison custody annually.¹¹
- ♦ Women are more likely to be convicted of crimes involving property or drugs that are motivated by poverty, gambling and/or substance abuse.

⁴ Sentencing Advisory Council, *Gender differences in Sentencing Outcomes*, July 2010, p.3

⁵ Department of Justice *Better Pathways: An integrated response to women's offending and reoffending*, State of Victoria, 2005, p.6

⁶ Department of Justice *Statistical Profile of the Victorian Prison System 2005-06 to 2009-10*, State of Victoria, 2010, p.13

⁷ Department of Justice, 2005, p.6

⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Prisoner numbers drop for the first time in a decade, Media Release, 8 December 2011

⁹ Sentencing Advisory Council, *ibid*, p.63

¹⁰ *op cit*, p. 8

¹¹ Department of Justice, *ibid*, 2005, p.7



- ♦ The severity of women's drug use is more closely related to their offending than it is for men.
- ♦ Women's offending often develops through relationships with family members, friends and significant others ... rather than the concept of 'peer associates' that is commonly cited as a risk factor for men.
- ♦ More women than men experience sexual, physical and psychological abuse and these experiences appear to contribute to women's criminality and shape their patterns of offending.
- ♦ The complex impact of mental illness, substance abuse and trauma is integral to women's offending, and there are higher rates of all three factors for women than men.¹²

Importantly, the research identifies a distinctive constellation of factors present for female offenders that shows their biographies, 'vary systematically from those of men. Contributing to their blurred status as both victims and offenders, women are more likely than men to have a history of factors, often causally inter-related, such as mental illness, physical or sexual victimisation in childhood or early adulthood, and a history of substance abuse. Women are also more likely than men to have primary caregiver status.'¹³

Women entering prison custody in Victoria share a complex range of unmet treatment and support needs that are linked to their offending, re-offending and subsequent imprisonment. In addition to substance abuse and mental illness identified above, these include:

- ♦ Poor physical health
- ♦ Limited support networks
- ♦ Low levels of education and high unemployment
- ♦ Inadequate and unstable accommodation
- ♦ Debt/financial difficulties and problem gambling¹⁴

Mentoring and young people as a crime prevention strategy

Mentoring has been widely used as a crime prevention strategy for young people who have had contact with the criminal justice system or are at risk of becoming involved in offending or anti-social behaviour.

There is little evidence about the long-term effectiveness of mentoring programs.¹⁵ Measurement of long-term outcomes has been limited because many programs have only been funded on a short-term or pilot basis.¹⁶

Positive findings amongst evaluations of mentoring projects for young people include:

- ♦ reduction in re-offending,
- ♦ reduction in offending behaviour,
- ♦ completion of juvenile justice orders,

¹² Department of Justice, *ibid*, 2005, p.9

¹³ Sentencing Advisory Council, *ibid*, 2010, p.63

¹⁴ Department of Justice, *ibid*, p.8

¹⁵ National Community Crime Prevention Programme *Mentoring and young people*, Tip sheet 9 (undated)

[http://www.crimeprevention.gov.au/agd/WWW/rwpattach.nsf/VAP/\(427A90835BD17F8C477D6585272A27DB\)~4515_TipSheet9_screen.pdf/\\$file/4515_TipSheet9_screen.pdf](http://www.crimeprevention.gov.au/agd/WWW/rwpattach.nsf/VAP/(427A90835BD17F8C477D6585272A27DB)~4515_TipSheet9_screen.pdf/$file/4515_TipSheet9_screen.pdf)

¹⁶ Big Brothers Big Sisters Melbourne Building an evidence base to practice 2004 Executive Summary, p.6



- ♦ reduced substance misuse and other risky behaviours, and
- ♦ increased participation/performance in education training and employment.¹⁷

In terms of economic efficiency, the evaluation of the Big Brothers, Big Sisters found that even modest reductions in the prevalence rates of high risk behaviour are sufficient to make the program an effective intervention because the life time cost estimates for a young person who disengages from school, uses drugs and embarks on a criminal career are large.¹⁸

Why develop a program specifically for female offenders?

Given that women follow distinctive pathways to criminality, and overall, represent a higher need, lower risk offender group than men, it is logical that crime prevention strategies and supports for women in prison and leaving prison should be tailored to those needs.

The Centre for Gender and Justice in California, USA has been conducting research into gender and justice for over a decade. Much of their work draws on the Relational Model as a theoretical base.¹⁹ This theory posits that 'the primary motivation for women throughout life is not separation, but establishing a strong sense of connection. When a woman is disconnected from others, or involved in abusive relationships, she experiences disempowerment, confusion and diminished zest, vitality and self-worth-fertile ground for addiction.'²⁰ The relational model 'affirms the power of connection and the pain of disconnection for women'.²¹

Bloom and Covington from the Center for Gender and Justice characterise gender-specific approaches as those that 'take into account real differences between men and women in their learning and relationship styles and life circumstances...The unique needs and issues of women and girls should be addressed in a safe, trusting and supportive women-focused environment'. An analysis of gender specific approaches, identifying effective strategies for working with female offenders in community correctional settings found that effective programs:

- ♦ work with clients to broaden their range of responses to various types of behaviours and needs,
- ♦ enhance their coping and decision making skills, and
- ♦ use an 'empowerment' model of skill building to develop competencies in order to enable women to achieve independence.²²

¹⁷ National Community Crime Prevention Programme, *ibid*

¹⁸ Big Brothers Big Sisters, *ibid*, p. 6

¹⁹ Developed by the Stone Center at Wellesley College (Covington and Surrey, 1997) p.4

²⁰ Bloom, B E and Covington, S The Center for Gender and Justice La Jolla CA *Gender-specific programming for Female Offenders: What is it and Why is it Important*, Paper presented at the 50th Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology 1998, Washington DC, p.13

²¹ Covington, S *The Relational Theory of Women's Psychological Development: Implications for the Criminal Justice System* published in *Female Offenders: Critical Perspectives and Effective Interventions*, 2nd Edition, Ruth Zaplin, Editor, 2007, p. 5

²² *Female Offenders in the community: An analysis of Innovative Strategies and Program* was conducted for the National Institute of Corrections by Austin, Bloom and Donahue (1992) in Bloom and Covington, *ibid*, p.11



Mentoring programs for women in the criminal justice system

Mentoring is a frequently used as a strategy to support prisoners, male and female, in their transition between prison and return to the community in Australia and internationally. A recent Victorian study of mentoring for ex-prisoners, examining theoretical underpinnings and research data on VACRO's post-release women's mentoring program as a case study²³, found that of all criminal justice 'interventions', 'mentoring remains among the least well developed both in theoretical terms and in the empirical base underpinning its deployment, with little known of the effectiveness of offender mentoring.'

In terms of VACRO's Women's (post-release) Mentoring Program, the study found:

- ♦ The level of social isolation of participants in the Women's Mentoring Program and thus the tenuousness of their links with other human beings was 'striking'. Two thirds of women in the study (n= 25) had only one or no regular contacts.
- ♦ Women often chose to limit social contact as a strategy for bringing their lives into order and attempting the transition away from offending lifestyles...it was recognised by many of the women that relationship partners were often part of the problem rather than part of the solution.
- ♦ Further, many women were isolated, not by choice but through the dissolution of key familiar and intimate relationships, often related to the women's persistent offending and chaotic lifestyles, including drug use, that were associated with it.

In terms of the mentoring relationship, the study found:

- ♦ That this relationship is more than just a substitute for normal social relationships that are unavailable. The mentor is someone who has committed to supporting the mentee through her post-release problems, who knows that the mentee has been in prison and has some idea of what kinds of experiences this entails and who will respond to the issues that the mentee raises in predictable ways: honestly, confidentially, safely and non-judgementally.
- ♦ The fact that the mentor is not someone with whom the mentee has an emotional or familial attachment means that her advice can be used in ways that are potentially more helpful.
- ♦ All of the features of the women's reported experience with their mentor are in harmony with the key dimensions of effective therapeutic relationships, but differed in the genuinely collaborative aspect of the mentoring relationships.

The study highlighted the 'distinctly gendered nature of (the participants') post-release experience. Unlike the research on men's desistance, which continually identifies romantic relationships as a lever for men's movement away from crime, for many women in this study their male (ex) partners were a source of risk and stress. ... Gender dynamics may mean that it is necessary for some women to shed themselves of certain types of relationship in order to move out of offending.'²⁴ Brown and Ross point out, again in distinction from the experience of men, 'the limited range of resources that are within the reach of highly

²³ Brown, M and Ross, S *Mentoring, Social Capital and Desistance: A Study of Women Released from Prison*, The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology, V43, N 1, 2010, p. 31 – 50

²⁴ Brown and Ross, op cit, p.48



marginal women'. While work training and employment may be important to men's desistance, it tends to have a far less central part of women prisoners' lives both prior to and following their exits from custody.

The study found that the participants regarded their mentor 'as a friend rather than a role model (and) that at the very least a positive mentoring experience might give the women concerned new experience and practice in relationship building, instantiating Covington's (2002, p.130) principle that 'in order to create change in their live, incarcerated women need to experience relationships that do not repeat their histories of loss, neglect and abuse.' The study showed pathways by which social capital could be activated (through the mentors) for purposes that were both practical in nature – providing job or house references, lending reputation in court proceedings – and that intervened in the complex process of psychological change that must accompany letting go an old life and personal identity and finding new ways of being in the world.²⁵

Mentoring for adult women in the community

The literature review points to the suitability of community-based mentoring for adult women charged with an offence. As a methodology, mentoring has shown promise with young people and with adult women leaving prison, although it can have variable and sometimes inconclusive results. Some of the variations relate to the short-term nature of programs, their variation in implementation or the lack of take up from participants. There is a strong theoretical foundation that identifies the importance, for women, of connecting with trusting and supporting relationships, and the rehabilitative role this can play.

Further, it is understood that the implications of women's imprisonment are far reaching. The social and economic costs are incurred not only by the women themselves, but by their families – especially their children – and the community as a whole. A recent UK report found that 'because they are convicted for relatively petty crimes and do not pose a serious threat to society, and because of their unique roles as primary carers, non-violent women are a special case.'²⁶ The literature underscores the potential for the women and mentoring program, with the appropriate conditions in place, to provide benefits that flow not only to individual women, but also to their families and their communities.

Finding 1:

Based on the literature scan and the advice of key informants, the Women and Mentoring program represents a unique model of a crime prevention program for women in Australia²⁷, and potentially internationally. On this basis alone, the Women and Mentoring pilot is significant and represents a significant opportunity to contribute to our learning about 'what works' in terms of gender-specific crime prevention strategies.

²⁵ Brown and Ross, op cit, p.48

²⁶ New Economics Foundation *Unlocking Value: How we all benefit from investing in alternatives to prison for women offenders*, 2008, p.4

²⁷ The Court Integrated Services Program (CISP), in operation at three Victorian magistrates' courts: Melbourne, Sunshine and Latrobe Valley, targets clients (male and female) at a similar point in the justice system. However, this is a formal program, operating on a case management model. While there are some parallels, the differences are also significant, particularly in that this program is the formal provision of services, rather than an informal support mechanism, provided on a voluntary basis.



The Women and Mentoring Model

The Women and Mentoring pilot program adopted an 'action research' methodology to allow for its development during the pilot phase. Development of the model has drawn on information from a range of philosophies and sources: best practice principles of mentoring and social work models; experience from VACRO's Women's Mentoring Program, a program designed to support women leaving prison and reintegrating back to the community, and lessons learnt as the program evolved during the pilot.

The table below provides a summary of the key components of the model and describes the elements of the Women and Mentoring program as outlined in the program's Operations Manual. A comment is also provided, based on the experience of the pilot, whether each element is considered essential, modifiable or is recommended. The model elements are discussed in more detail in the next section of this report.

Model components	Elements of the Women and Mentoring Program	Essential / Modifiable / Recommended
Program governance	Program governance is based on a partnership model encompassing the auspice agency (The Wellington) in conjunction with partner organisations represented on the Steering Committee.	Clear and accountable management structure is essential . Structure can be modified to suit program auspice and context and the level of participation of partner organisations.
	The program's Steering Committee comprises key stakeholders from the auspice agency, referral sources (police, legal aid); the Neighbourhood Justice Centre (the local magistrates court); local government / women's health; women and justice advisor; VACRO and the Department of Justice. The Steering Committee meets monthly.	A steering committee or reference group with key stakeholders, especially referrers such as police and legal aid, is an essential structure for promotion, communication and continuous improvement of the program. Membership can be determined based on the local justice / community support service system. Monthly meetings are recommended.
Program management	Program management is the responsibility of the program's coordinator and includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Communications management ♦ Mentor management ♦ Participant management ♦ Administration and financial management The coordinator role is staffed on a job-share basis, with each coordinator working 2.5 days per week, sharing some time for handover of information.	Communication, mentor and participant management are essential management functions. Depending on the infrastructure of the program auspice, some elements of administration and financial management could be delegated. The coordinator job share model is a recommended risk management strategy and strengthens the program management structure.
	'Communication management' includes all tasks for promoting the program (development of promotional material, ensuring that the information is widely promoted and so on). The program needs to be promoted to a number of distinct groups, with messages tailored	'Communications' management, encompassing relationship building, is an essential element of the program, especially during the program development phase.



Model components	Elements of the Women and Mentoring Program	Essential / Modifiable / Recommended
	<p>accordingly: referrers and potential referrers, potential mentors, potential participants and the community.</p> <p>Communications management also encompasses what is often referred to as 'relationship management'. A key function for the coordinator is to build relationships with the local service network and ensure that key staff are aware of and understand the program and can make appropriate referrals. This occurs on one level through the Steering Committee structure. This alone, is not enough. Coordinators regularly contact (by phone, in person) the three police stations in the City of Yarra, legal aid providers and other referrers to the program. The coordinator is also a member of various relevant local networks and participates in these meetings. These contacts and activities help build the program's profile, keeps it front of mind for busy service providers and allows for discussion about improvements. The program has found that regular contact is particularly important for building relationships with the police (given their importance as a key referrer, and challenges to getting this information through to police personnel due to staff turnover, shift work, leave arrangements, operational priorities).</p>	
Program protocols	<p>Program protocols / procedures are developed for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Risk management ◆ Incident / adverse event procedures ◆ Records management ◆ Privacy and confidentiality ◆ Codes of conduct (for mentors, participants) ◆ Mentor / participant meetings ◆ Referrals and referral feedback loops ◆ Grievance and disciplinary procedures ◆ Work safety ◆ Reimbursement of expenses 	Essential
Program principles	<p>Core principles of the program include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Voluntary participation ◆ Inclusive (non-discriminatory) participation ◆ Ethical and professional practice (which includes specifying the rights and responsibilities of mentors and participants) ◆ Effective governance and management 	Essential



Model components	Elements of the Women and Mentoring Program	Essential / Modifiable / Recommended
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Knowledge is critical – to support informed decision making about participation 	
	<p>Other core principles include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Local community program ◆ Action research methodology ◆ Early intervention is best 	<p>The local nature of the program has been a critical success factor. The action research methodology has been useful in the learning stages of the pilot. Early intervention is recommended, but not always within the control of the program.</p>
Program policies and procedures	<p>Policies and procedures are documented in the program's Operational Manual. Policies and procedures (not referred to elsewhere) include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Participant eligibility ◆ Referral procedures (receiving referrals, referral sources, including self-referrals, providing feedback to referees) ◆ Screening referrals for suitability (eg. checking with the referee that person does not present a safety risk to the mentor) ◆ Assessment procedures ◆ Home visit procedures 	<p>Essential. Documented policies and procedures are essential, but can be modified to the context of the program's auspice / management model.</p>
Mentor management	<p>The program coordinators are responsible for managing the mentor group. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Promoting the program to potential mentors through a range of media (eg. local papers, daily press, website, promotional material through local community outlets etc) ◆ Recruitment of mentors ◆ Selection of mentors subject to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Checks: police, working with children, referee ◆ Agreement to code of conduct, general principles and rules, confidentiality agreement, mentor / participant agreement ◆ Induction of mentors ◆ Training of mentors ◆ Ongoing support and supervision to mentors 	<p>Essential.</p> <p>Mentors must understand the purpose of the program and potential risks. Mentors must be assessed for their suitability. The program has developed a set of template documents which communicate this information to mentors (eg. Code of conduct; General principles and rules for mentors; Mentor position description; Agreement between mentors and participants)</p> <p>Mentors in the Women and Mentoring Program have been recruited in two rounds over two years. Other agencies could approach this differently (eg. more frequently, or mentors could be recruited individually but there are efficiencies in inducting and training mentors in groups. Further the group intake allows mentors to bond as a supportive network.)</p>
	<p>Mentors are required to complete the Initial Training Program before entering a mentoring relationship.</p> <p>Mentor support and supervision includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Fortnightly mentor group meetings which include a 	<p>- Initial and ongoing training</p> <p>- Ongoing support and supervision</p> <p>- Debriefing options</p> <p>for mentors are essential.</p> <p>Structures for providing training, support and supervision could be</p>



Model components	Elements of the Women and Mentoring Program	Essential / Modifiable / Recommended
	<p>mix of formal training and opportunity for mentor debriefing and feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ One to one advice from the coordinator, as needed ♦ Completion of a monthly journal of mentoring activities ♦ Opportunity for formal / informal debriefing as needed 	modified, depending on the program auspice / program set-up. Fortnightly mentor meetings are recommended.
Participant management	<p>The program coordinators are responsible for managing the participants. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Recruitment of participants based on defined eligibility criteria²⁸ through referrals from other agencies or self-referrals ♦ Screening referrals with referees (especially in relation to potential safety risks for coordinator, mentors) ♦ Providing program information to participants (eg. voluntary nature of participation) ♦ Assessment of participant eligibility / suitability during a home visit assessment ♦ Acceptance of participant to the program, subject to meeting eligibility criteria and agreeing to abide by the mentor / participant agreement ♦ Referrals to other service options if the woman is not eligible / suitable for the program; mentoring relationship breaks down or if a custodial sentence is received. 	<p>Essential.</p> <p>Participants need to be able to make an informed decision about participation. They also need to understand the basis on which they are accepted (or not accepted to the program) and to understand their rights and responsibilities, and the rights and responsibilities of the mentor.</p> <p>The home visit assessment includes procedures for mitigating safety risks for the coordinator. The purpose of the home visit is to establish the relationship with the participant, learn more about them and assess any potential safety concerns for mentors visiting a participant at home. Some mentoring programs advise against home visits. It is not necessarily an essential element of the program.</p>
Managing mentoring relationships	<p>While participants and mentors are encouraged to take responsibility for the mentoring relationship, the program coordinators are responsible for the overarching management of the mentoring relationships. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Matching participants with mentor based on assessments / knowledge of both parties / aiming for the 'best fit' between mentor and participant ♦ Protocols, guidelines and boundaries for the mentoring relationship (eg. when, where to meet, home visits, phone contact, transport, gift giving, disclosure of personal information). Mentoring pairs are encouraged to negotiate their relationships, but they do this with guidance and the capacity to 'check' with the coordinator and the mentor group, through 	<p>Essential.</p> <p>Mentors and participants need to understand the parameters and boundaries for the relationship, and the level of flexibility that exists. For example, the program guidelines suggest that mentors' time commitment is about four hours per week, including the fortnightly two-hour mentor meeting. However, this is negotiable between the pair.</p> <p>Experience shows that some weeks are more intense than others eg. if there is a court appearance. If the participant would like more time and the mentor is willing, this can be agreed between the pair.</p>

²⁸ Eligibility criteria: female, 18 years or older, in City of Yarra, currently charged with an offence or high risk of being charged, eg. several warnings, assessed by referrer and coordinator as not presenting a safety risk to mentor, understands the role of the mentor and that participation is voluntary.

Model components	Elements of the Women and Mentoring Program	Essential / Modifiable / Recommended
	<p>supervision structures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Setting mentoring goals, maintaining ongoing contact and review of mentoring relationships by checking with both the mentor and the participant. ♦ Procedures for terminating a mentoring relationship. ♦ Procedures for concluding mentoring relationships. 	



Discussion and Evaluation Findings

This section of the report presents the evaluation information collected, discussion of the information and outlines key findings. It is structured around the three key areas of investigation: the overall program, its implementation and outcomes.

Overall program

Rationale for the program

There is an opportunity to provide support to women at an earlier stage of their contact with the criminal justice system...the period immediately after a woman has been charged and before a court has heard her case. Intervening in a meaningful way at this earlier stage may well lessen the negative effects of a woman's contact with the criminal justice system and assist in the likelihood of re-offending. (King and Davies, 2008)

The Women and Mentoring Program was established as a pilot action research project to provide 'new forms of community support for women in the initial stages of contact with the criminal justice system, particularly in the period following the laying of charges and appearances before the courts.'²⁹ It was established in response to the *Justice and Community Support for Women*³⁰ research that identified a gap in the types of support available for women at this time of contact with the criminal justice system.

The time between charge and court appearance is stressful and unsettling, women charged are often isolated at this time and may lack knowledge of the criminal justice system and of available services. A mentoring program for women was seen as a *practical and logical addition to existing supports...(and) an important social justice innovation with long term benefits to the woman and the community*³¹.

The rationale tested through this pilot program is that 'the likelihood of re-offending is reduced by early holistic mentor support during the period of the participants' encounters with the justice system'. Building participants' capacity and confidence through mentoring may also enable participants to 'manage and move on from the issues that underpin offending behaviours.'³²

Through the convergence of interest in the pilot from key community groups (Collingwood Rotary and The Wellington), local government (the City of Yarra) and local police, and with the establishment of the Neighbourhood Justice Centre in Collingwood in 2007, with its commitment to the principles of therapeutic jurisprudence and restorative justice, the setting was seen as ideal for testing this model.

Finding 2:

The rationale for the Women and Mentoring Program is consistent with criminological research that shows men and women have different patterns of criminal behaviour and pathways to crime, and that gender-specific programs are required to respond to the distinctive needs of female offenders.

²⁹ The Wellington *Women and Mentoring Operations Manual* (October, 2011) p.1

³⁰ King, D and Davies, Dr S *ibid* (September, 2008)

³¹ *ibid*, p. 17

³² The Wellington, p.1



Program aims and objectives

The key objectives of the Women and Mentoring Program are to reduce crime and recidivism by women in the City of Yarra through the use of mentoring.

The program aims to provide a new form of community support to a particular target group of vulnerable women (women charged with an offence and entering the criminal justice system in the City of Yarra) at a critical point in their lives.

Under the general principles and rules for mentors the program's aims and objectives are defined as: '...to support women who are at the point of being charged with a criminal offence, to encourage and assist them to utilise professional community support services including legal services, through the provision of support by voluntary female mentors from the community.

It seeks to foster functional and legal choices and behaviours, assist with rehabilitation where appropriate and reduce the likelihood of re-offending through role-modelling of appropriate behaviours, gentle challenging of anti-social behaviours and reinforcement of positive change.'³³

Documentation of the model

As the program uses an action research approach, documentation of the model has been an evolving process. Initial program guidelines and supporting documentation were produced in 2010.

The program has since updated the program guidelines to an Operations Manual, released in October 2011. The manual contains the policies, protocols and procedures and all program documentation. Program documentation from VACRO's Women's Mentoring Program has been shared and referred to in the development of the Operations Manual. (See: Women and Mentoring Program Model section of this report for more detail on the model.)

The policy section of the Operations Manual contains the program's:

- ♦ definition of mentoring, mentors and participants,
- ♦ core principles,
- ♦ governance structure,
- ♦ development, management and evaluation policies, and
- ♦ risk management and data management policies.

Protocols and procedures are designed for the program, program management, and general administration.

³³ The Wellington *General principles and rules for mentors*, Appendix 3



Standard documentation appended to the manual includes material for:

- ♦ mentors (code of conduct; general principles and rules; confidentiality agreement; position description; expenses reimbursement),
- ♦ participant assessment (assessment checklist; client assessment form),
- ♦ mentoring pairs (mentoring agreement and rights and responsibilities),
- ♦ promotion (program brochure; poster),
- ♦ referrals (police referral form; generic referral form), and
- ♦ mentoring training (training schedule).

Generic policies from The Wellington, as the auspice organisation are also attached covering grievances, disciplinary procedures and work safety.

Areas for improvement

The key test for the Operations Manual is to hypothesise whether the manual would enable another organisation or different staff to manage the program. Applying this test, there are some areas where information is either missing, limited, or assumed. As the manual is still in the process of evolution there is opportunity to address areas such as:

- ♦ Detail on the required skills, knowledge and qualifications of the coordinator role – eg. are social work qualifications considered mandatory? The Program Coordinator job description should be included in the manual so that the required professional qualifications are known.
- ♦ Detail on the recommended supports for the coordinator – eg. debriefing processes.
- ♦ Detail on the participant risk assessment processes, eg. how are mental health issues screened? Are there any validated screening or assessment tools that the program could use, such as self-esteem scales, or other assessment forms used for community-based programs? The operational manual indicates that the assessment is based on a social work assessment. More guidance should be provided on the conduct of a social work assessment.
- ♦ Providing more options on the client assessment form for co-presenting issues, such as other legal matters, family violence or intervention orders, housing issues, financial issues, drug and alcohol issues and so on. While participant records show that complex issues are explored and documented, the assessment form should reflect these issues in more detail – to act as a checklist for the assessor.

While the governance structure of the pilot program is outlined in the Operations Manual with the Steering Committee Terms of Reference to be added, this is an area that would need to be reviewed and revised if the program is instituted in another setting.

Most importantly though, the program requires an evaluation and performance monitoring system. There is much yet to be learnt about the use of a community-based mentoring approach for adult women at the point of being charged. This includes developing a more sophisticated understanding of the social return on investment of this approach and developing the appropriate methodologies and tools for monitoring achievements and outcomes. The model requires tools, for example, which enable the systematic collection of participant information, their engagement with the program and the results of their



participation. Attachment 3 provides an example of a (draft) performance measurement framework for local community safety and crime prevention in Western Australia, using a standard program logic approach.³⁴ A similar framework could be developed to add to the Women and Mentoring model. A case file audit tool has been developed for the evaluation that could be refined and included as part of the model's monitoring system.

Finding 3:

The Women and Mentoring Operations Manual (October, 2011) outlines the program's aims and objectives, history, principles, development, governance, management, administration and evaluation. It provides a clear explanation of its approach to mentoring and the recommended model of interacting with mentors and participants. Policies are outlined for the program management. Included with the Operations Manual are template documents (eg. Mentor Code of Conduct) and forms (eg. Code of Conduct, Assessment check list) that support standardised and consistent practice.

The Operations Manual lacks detail in some areas (as outlined under 'Areas for improvement'), which would need to be addressed.

Most importantly, the Operations Manual lacks a system and tools for the overall evaluation and monitoring of the program. This is essential for building the program's knowledge and evidence base.

Program management and coordination

The program is staffed by two part-time coordinators. During the program establishment phase, funds were only available to employ one coordinator on a part-time basis. From late 2011 the coordinator position became full-time, with the role filled on a job share basis by two staff. The two staff share some common time each week in order to ensure appropriate handover of information.

The Operations Manual states that the day-to-day management of the program is the responsibility of the Coordinator. This includes four dimensions:

- ◆ Communications management
- ◆ Mentor management – training, support and supervision
- ◆ Participant management
- ◆ Administration and financial management

The Operations Manual provides the detail on each of the management dimensions.

Program governance

The original research for the Women and Mentoring program suggested the establishment of a 'Reference Committee', comprising key stakeholders and referral sources, such as the police. The Reference Committee, as outlined in this research, is 'ultimately responsible for ensuring that adequate strategic

³⁴ Source: Australian Institute of Criminology *How do I know it worked? Measuring the effectiveness of crime prevention in Australia* Presentation: Peter Homel, Principal Criminologist – Crime Prevention, 23 Nov 2011-12-20, Slide: 20



planning, organisation and resourcing is in place prior to the commencement of the program and the appointment of a program coordinator.³⁵

The Women and Mentoring pilot program established a Steering Committee, rather than a Reference Committee. Feedback from Steering Committee members showed agreement on:

- ♦ The importance of a sound governance model for the program, with clear reporting structures and connection to the program auspice agency.
- ♦ The need to promote and develop local relationships through the governance structure. For example, the participation of the police and community lawyers on the Steering Committee has been an effective strategy for maintaining contact with key referees to the program.
- ♦ The need for a clear program rationale, aims and objectives to guide the program's development.

The evaluation found that Steering Committee members' views differed on the effectiveness of the committee in the early stages of the pilot. In the initial stages of the pilot, some members held concerns about the strength of the links between The Wellington, as the auspice agency and the Steering Committee, and whether the initial program guidelines were sufficient to cover work with this complex participant group. Other members were satisfied with the program's 'action research' approach and perceived this as the program's learning and development phase. The committee has since worked through these issues, and the Operations Manual provides more policies, procedures and protocols to cover the potentially challenging areas for delivery of the program. This experience underscores important learnings about the importance of strong and effective governance of the program and program documentation. Steering Committee members agreed that matters around safety, risk management and duty of care are paramount for the operation of the program.

Finding 4:

The Women and Mentoring program requires a sound governance model and clear articulation of the program's rationale, aims, objectives, policies and procedures, given the importance of the duty of care and potential risk issues. The Women and Mentoring pilot experienced some challenges from a governance perspective during its development, mainly due to some lack of clarity around key processes. However, these 'grey areas' have been addressed and there is a shared confidence that the pilot has developed a strong model.

Use of best practice processes

The management of the mentoring relationship in the Women and Mentoring program is bound by:

- ♦ Policies and protocols which outline roles, responsibilities and define confidentiality, duty of care issues and risk management procedures.
- ♦ Assessment of participants, including a risk assessment. Women

(The coordinator) gives volunteers an honest appraisal of the program and then lets people self-select. You understand you need a strong sense of self-esteem...It's not a program for wimps.

Volunteer mentor

³⁵ King and Davies, p.20



subject to charges involving assault or aggression are not eligible for the program.

- ♦ Checking of potential mentors through referees, police checks and working with children checks.
- ♦ Recruitment and selection procedures for mentors that test the mentor's commitment and ensure they are suitable for the role.
- ♦ Regular schedule of training for the mentors to introduce and explore the complex issues, such as maintaining boundaries, mental health, drug and alcohol and legal issues.
- ♦ Regular meetings (fortnightly) for mentors that provide an opportunity to share challenges, gain support, debrief and develop strategies.
- ♦ The keeping of a monthly journal by mentors to record all mentoring activities.
- ♦ Ongoing assessment of the participant, and the suitability of their match and their involvement in the program.
- ♦ Risk management guidelines for meetings between mentors and participants, acknowledging that there are 'risks to mentors who are working unsupervised in the community with people who have a known history of offending'. The guidelines specify procedures to minimise risks, for example, mentors notify the coordinator where and when they plan to meet with the participant and confirm when the meeting is complete; mentors are to carry a mobile phone with them at all times; meetings are only held in daylight hours and in a public place, except by specific agreement.
- ♦ Policies for dealing with incidents, significant adverse events, grievances and safety matters.

The program's key mantra is that the mentor is a 'friend with boundaries' and their role is 'to walk beside' the participant. Mentors are advised that they do not provide a 'service', they are not to provide legal or financial advice, they are bound to report any issues of safety concerns, especially in relation to children or suicide ideation, and that in the event of an emergency, emergency services are to be contacted. The mentor is not expected to 'know everything' but to demonstrate how to find things out and problem solve.

'She isn't like other friends or family...I don't go to her house, I don't know her family, I can't call her at 11pm...but I feel that someone is there for me, especially if I'm not feeling great.'
'It's good to have an impartial friend who can help with everyday things.'

Program participants

The Women and Mentoring program's approach to mentoring is consistent with good practice principles identified in the research^{36,37}, which include:

- ♦ A statement of purpose
- ♦ A program plan
- ♦ Policies and procedures
- ♦ A recruitment and selection process
- ♦ Mentor preparation
- ♦ A mentor / mentee matching and monitoring strategy
- ♦ Mentor / mentee support

³⁶ Mentoring Australia *Mentoring: Benchmarks for Effective and Responsible Mentoring Programs* <http://www.benchmarking-australia.org/benchmark.htm>

³⁷ National Community Crime Prevention Programme, *ibid*



The National Community Crime Prevention Programme cites some further good practice principles for maximising the crime prevention outcomes from mentoring projects for young people that are relevant:

- ♦ Recruitment processes based on informal and formal checks
- ♦ Mentor skills in: listening, respect, empathy, openness, flexibility, ability to see solutions and recognise opportunities
- ♦ Building of a pool of mentors
- ♦ Orientation training and pre-mentorship training covering key topics, eg. safety, communication, confidentiality, conflict management, legal issues, health issues
- ♦ Training in desirable behaviour and 'coaching' on attitudes to model
- ♦ Supervision of mentors and ongoing contact with the programme coordinator
- ♦ Voluntary participation
- ♦ Screening of participants
- ♦ Activities based on the needs of participants
- ♦ Strong working relationships and referral networks
- ♦ Articulation of the mentoring relationship and communication of this to both participants and mentors
- ♦ Clearly defined policies relating to screening, recruitment and training of mentors, matching processes

Areas for improvement

The program model measures well against good practice principles, but there are gaps in two areas: a closure policy, and evaluation and assessment.

A closure policy should be developed which provides guidance on the range of possible scenarios for a mentoring relationship 'closing', for example:

- ♦ straightforward closure of mentoring relationship – Will the program continue to follow up the participant to ascertain longer term outcomes? What happens if the pair wish to maintain contact? Is there some formal closure event, particularly to acknowledge positive outcomes?
- ♦ termination of a mentoring relationship – What are some useful examples of grounds for termination of the relationship, eg. behaviour of the mentor, behaviour of the participant, significant event

Importantly, the program has established a referral link with VACRO, so that mentoring pairs can transfer to this organisation in the event of a participant receiving a custodial sentence. This is documented and has occurred in one instance and was attempted in another situation, but the WAM participant was ineligible for VACRO.

Evaluation and assessment was identified under the Operations Manual section.

Finding 5:

The Women and Mentoring program's mentoring approach is sound and is consistent with most good practice principles for maximising the crime prevention outcomes from mentoring projects for young people, as outlined by the National Community Crime Prevention Programme and general good practice principles for mentoring.



(Finding 5 continued)

Processes for closure and/or termination of mentoring relationships could be further developed.

The program has developed a referral relationship with VACRO, which enables mentoring pairs to be voluntarily transferred to that organisation in the event a participant receives a custodial sentence.

This is an example of the Women and Mentoring model contributing to new understandings of good practice principles for women's mentoring programs using this community-based approach.

The Model: Strengths and Weaknesses

Stakeholders were asked to identify what they perceived as the strengths and weakness of the Women and Mentoring model, as tested through the pilot project.

Stakeholders identified the following characteristics as the strengths of the Women and Mentoring model:

- ♦ The program addresses a gap in the justice service system (ie. mentoring for adult women who are being charged with an offence but prior to sentencing) and adds to the suite of services available.
- ♦ The program's focus on primary / secondary prevention.
- ♦ The preventative / supportive focus of the program which enables flow-on effects at the family level (eg. stability for children).
- ♦ The program's focus on providing practical support and assistance, which participants report can make the difference between coping or not coping, complying or not complying.
- ♦ Having two program coordinators to provide back-up for the program.
- ♦ Steering Committee members who bring extensive experience in the community and justice sectors, represent key referral organisations and provide strong links to the local service network.

Weaknesses of the program model were identified as:

- ♦ The limited infrastructure of the auspice agency.
- ♦ The limited number of referrals to the program (also experienced by other community-based programs at NJC).
- ♦ The need for more work to engage more participants from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds (although participant data shows a reasonable level of participation of CALD clients) and to engage ethno-specific agencies and programs.
- ♦ Outreach difficulty to residents charged with an offence in another municipality.
- ♦ Minimum program budget that limits opportunities, eg. to expand, to test ideas.
- ♦ Challenges in covering mentor absences (eg. when they are on holidays) and ensuring that participants remaining supported (eg. by the coordinator in the interim).

Promoting the program to police has been a challenge rather than a weakness of the model. While police have been consistently supportive of the pilot program, there are systemic challenges to ensuring that operational police are aware of, and referring to, the program.



The critical success factors of the Women and Mentoring pilot program were seen as:

- ♦ The skills, experience, tenacity and commitment of the Coordinators.
- ♦ The productive relationships built and established with the court, police, community legal, key referrers and relevant service providers.
- ♦ Support from the police for the program, especially their advocacy work in the program's establishment.
- ♦ The involvement of the Neighbourhood Justice Centre, with its focus on therapeutic jurisprudence, crime prevention and community involvement; access to the single magistrate and access to the range of NJC on-site support services.
- ♦ The strong network and commitment of the City of Yarra services (police, community legal, local government).
- ♦ The involvement of VACRO and the women and justice advisor, which provides the program with direct knowledge and experience of the establishment of the post-prison-release Women and Mentoring program.
- ♦ The commitment of:
 - the 'drivers' of the program (staff, Steering Committee including those driving the original concept);
 - the mentors, and
 - the referrers.
- ♦ The mentor training and ongoing support structures.

The most significant strength of the pilot program is that a unique program model has been developed to support women charged with an offence and that this model has been shown to be viable.

Finding 6:

The most significant strength of the Women and Mentoring pilot program is that a unique program model has been developed to support women charged with an offence and that this model has been shown to be viable.

Program Implementation

Reaching participants

The program has received 16 referrals. Of these:

- ♦ 2 referrals were inappropriate and were referred to other agencies
- ♦ 2 matches did not work out
- ♦ 3 mentoring relationships have concluded with satisfactory outcomes
- ♦ 2 women have received custodial sentences. Of these women, one matched pair has transferred from the Women and Mentoring program to VACRO's mentoring program
- ♦ 7 participants are currently matched with mentors and actively involved in the mentoring relationship
- ♦ 2 new referrals have been received, but may not be able to taken up prior to the completion of the pilot program



The experience of the program to date shows that a slight 'drop off' of participants needs to be anticipated as it is natural that some relationships will not work. Despite this, the program shows a high success rate in the mentoring relationships – of the 14 mentorships commenced, 10 mentorships (78%) have either successfully concluded or are currently active (one now with VACRO).

Participant profile

Client data has been examined for 11 of the 14 participants.³⁸ Table 1 below shows the charges against participants. Theft or shoplifting was the most frequent charge, which is consistent with the literature findings. A number of participants were charged with more than one offence and one participant was not charged.

Charge	Number
Theft / shoplifting	7
Breach of CBO	2
Debt	1
Fraud	1
Drug trafficking	1
Traffic offences	1
Drink driving	1
Driving without a licence	1
Stalking	1
Total	16

Table 1: Women and Mentoring program participant charges

- ♦ Participants' ages ranged from 26 years to 68 years, with the majority aged between 30 and 40.
- ♦ Seven of the eleven participants have, between them, a total of twelve children (under the age of 18).
- ♦ Six of these children are in out-of-home care (foster care, in care of Department of Human Services).
- ♦ Six participants are from an Anglo-Australian background. Other participants are first or second generation backgrounds – two from European background, two from an Asian background and one from a Middle Eastern background.

Consistent with the literature on women in contact with the justice system, program participants experience a constellation of other factors and complications. Table 2 below presents some of the co-presenting issues of participants. It shows that participants were highly likely to present with alcohol and other drug, mental health, family violence or other legal matters. All participants had at least one additional co-presenting issue, and a number of participants had multiple issues. Depression and anxiety were the most common mental health issues.

	Yes	No	Likely	Unsure	Comment	Total
Previous charges	5	3		3		11
Mental health issues	7	1	2	1		11
Alcohol and other drugs issues	8	2		1		11
Financial / hardship issues	5	3			Minor: 3	11
Family violence issues / history	4	5	2			11

Table 2: Women and Mentoring program participant co-presenting issues

³⁸ Utilising current available data collected by the program.



- ♦ Most participants had secure housing, one participant was homeless and a couple had problems with their accommodation.
- ♦ Financial hardship issues included matters such as non-payment of outstanding bills or issues caused by non-payment of child support payments from ex-partners.
- ♦ Most participants had family issues – either estrangement or isolation from their family, family violence, children in care or unsupportive relationships.
- ♦ At least three participants had serious physical health issues.

The profile of the participants shows that the program is reaching eligible participants. Client data is also consistent with the findings of the literature review which contends that women in the criminal justice are dealing with a complex constellation of factors, that their offences most frequently involve property, theft or drug related offences, that they often have poor mental and/or physical health, limited support networks and issues relating to care of children.

Finding 7:

The most common charge faced by participants of the Women and Mentoring pilot program is theft. The women participating in the program are also dealing with a complex constellation of factors, consistent with the findings of the literature, with issues ranging from drug and alcohol, mental health, family violence, poor physical health, drug and financial hardship. Seven of the eleven participants have – between them – twelve children (under the age of 18). Six of these children are currently in care, generally of extended family members.

Referral pathways

Generating appropriate and sufficient referrals has been an issue for the program, but this is a common experience for community-based programs in the City of Yarra / NJC. One of the underlying issues for this is that around 50% of people charged in the City of Yarra are non-residents but only residents of Yarra are eligible to participate in the program. Further, women only comprise around 10% of all offenders. Of this group, the majority live outside the municipality and a further proportion of offenders are juveniles, and therefore not eligible for the program.

The program anticipated that the police would be the key referrer to the program, as they are in contact with women at the point of being charged. While the program has received referrals from the police, research conducted by the program has identified the systemic difficulties in ensuring that police are aware of, and referring to the program.³⁹ Due to the police structures and systems (10 weeks annual leave, shift work, staff turnover) and, of course, their focus on their core business of enforcement, maintaining knowledge of the program in large police stations is a challenge. In its establishment phase, the program benefitted from very active involvement and interest of local police command. While relationships with the police are positive, it is challenging to maintain the level of engagement.

It's a great thing the police referred me to the program...they should do it for everyone.

Participant

I picked up a pamphlet about the program at the NJC...The police never mentioned it.

Participant

³⁹ *The Women's Mentoring Program: Barriers to client referral and the identification of appropriate strategic direction*, April 2011



The program has learnt that promoting the program to the police has to be an ongoing task, as well as ensuring there are effective links with the police through a network such as the Steering Committee. The program has received at least four referrals from community lawyers. This referral pathway has worked well, with the Victorian Legal Aid positive about the program and the positive options that it provides their clients.

The four participants interviewed for the evaluation entered the program through a range of referral sources:

- ♦ one was referred by the police
- ♦ two were referred by a legal aid lawyer
- ♦ one self-referred.

One woman, referred by a lawyer, had also heard about the program from another participant.

Areas for improvement:

If offenders do not attend court, are unprepared or breach their court orders, the workload implications for police are significant. Positive data on court attendances, reduced breaches and increased compliance with orders is the most practical message to promote to police. While there is strong support for the program's community benefits, greater efficiency and reduced workload is a strong selling point.

Finding 8:

The Women and Mentoring pilot program has received referrals from all anticipated referral sources: police, community lawyers, other services providers and self-referrals.

The pilot has found it challenging ensuring that police (at the three local police stations) are aware of, and referring to, the program.

However, the program has had unanticipated success with referrals from community lawyers. Community lawyers have seen a direct correlation between program participation and improvements in client compliance with court-based orders. This has provided the incentive to refer further clients to the program.

Assessment process

Potential participants are assessed by the Program Coordinator at a face-to-face meeting, based on a 'social work' assessment, a standardised approach to discussing an individual's 'whole' situation. It is designed to elicit a picture of the individual and their circumstances, including their safety, family situation, mental health or drug and alcohol issues and so on. The assessment is also designed to:

- ♦ learn about the participant and get to know them.
- ♦ identify issues which are pertinent for the mentoring relationship, in particular whether there are any potential risks to safety of either the participant or the mentor.



- ♦ inform the matching process and ensure that, as far as possible, the participant is matched with a compatible mentor.

The program has established standards for responding to a referral (within 14 days). Potential participants are advised of the outcome at the conclusion of the assessment interview. If the program is not suitable or the woman is not interested, referrals are made to other services as appropriate. Potential applicants not accepted to the program are advised of the reasons for the decision.

If there are no known safety risks, the assessment or the first appointment is generally undertaken at the potential participant's home. Home visits are undertaken with at least two people (two staff or one staff and a mentor). Procedures for home visits specify that the level of risk of a home visit is determined prior to the visit. The main office is informed at the end of the appointment if appropriate.

Assessment is defined as an ongoing process, subject to constant review through reflections with the mentors. The Coordinator indicated that the process is 'not perfect', and that information not picked up in the assessment is learnt about participants through feedback from mentors. However, it was felt that the key safety considerations for mentors were covered. The appropriateness of the assessment is also indicated by program participation – only two participants were found to be inappropriate and a further two 'dropped out' of the program.

Reaching mentors

The program currently has nine mentors, supporting seven active mentor relationships. At least one mentor is matched to two participants. One mentor pair has recently been transferred to VACRO.

In the first year of operation (2010), the program recruited five mentors, each of whom were particularly suited to the role through their experience and qualifications. In 2011, a further eight mentors were recruited and some of the original mentors have stayed with the program.

The program aims to have more mentors than mentees, so that it is ready to respond to new referrals.

The program has recruited a sufficient pool of mentors to respond to current participants. The size of the group is also manageable given the staffing resources of the program and the need to support mentors through training and meetings. The program Coordinator estimates that the program could potentially deal with up to 12 – 15 mentors, but acknowledges it will not reach this level during the pilot phase. A larger group of mentors would also be based on having a pool of experienced mentors who have reduced need for support in the mentoring role and can also help less experienced mentors through sharing their stories and experiences at mentoring meetings.

Mentors reported that they learnt about the program from a variety of sources:

- ♦ City of Yarra website
- ♦ Fitzroy Residents Association website
- ♦ The Wellington Centre



- ♦ Community newspapers (eg. Melbourne Times)
- ♦ The Herald Sun
- ♦ Seek website / Volunteer Victoria website
- ♦ Word of mouth

Local mentors appreciated that the program was local. However, not all mentors are local – some are from the inner south or middle-ring suburbs, and one from a large regional centre.

Finding 9:

The Women and Mentoring pilot program has recruited around 12 mentors over its two years of operation, in two intakes. The program has been promoted in a range of sources (eg. volunteer websites, local newspapers) as well as word of mouth. Mentors come from a range of professional and non-professional background, from the local area and from outside the local area, including a regional centre. Motivations for joining the program also vary, but most have a clear understanding that they are in a position to share their skills and make a contribution.

Supports for participants and mentors

The program model components and overall program discussion outlines the level of support available to participants and mentor. In summary:

- ♦ Mentors are provided with initial training modules as orientation to the mentoring role
- ♦ Mentors are provided with ongoing training delivered through their regular fortnightly meetings
- ♦ Mentors are able and encouraged to contact the coordinators for advice at any time
- ♦ Mentors are able to access informal or formal debriefing in the event of an incident or adverse event

The mentors' training program has defined learning outcomes, which are designed to develop mentors' understanding of the complex service and support system that their participant is navigating, as well as the theory around some of the underlying issues and information about best and ethical practice. The program uses a guest speaker model, invited to address the mentors on specific topics. This enables mentors to hear the presentations and then to engage in discussion. In 2011, for example, guest speakers included representatives from the NJC, Victoria Police, the Domestic Violence Resource Centre, the Fitzroy Legal Centre, Odyssey House Victoria (alcohol and other drug service), financial counselling, community health (counselor) and VACRO (advocacy service for offenders).

Through the mentoring program, participants primarily deal directly with their mentor. The level of support provided through this relationship is negotiated between the pair. In the experience of the program, this averages to around two hours per week, but mentors report that they can provide more hours of contact during intense periods of need, for example, when there may be multiple hearings, or support services to visit. In other weeks, contact time may be reduced. During the mentoring, a key focus is facilitating participants' use of support services that they have been referred to – either on a voluntary basis or as part of community-based orders.



Participants are also encouraged to access any support from the Wellington, such as complementary therapies available, but this is entirely at their discretion.

Finding 10:

The Women and Mentoring pilot program provides appropriate supports to mentors through induction and training, ongoing training and meetings, one-to-one support and support for critical incidents.

Mentors are trained and resourced to provide appropriate support to participants. Mentors typically support participants to prepare for and attend court hearings and other support services. They also assist participants with day-to-day matters (eg. childcare arrangements, Centrelink appointments) and with informal support. The process for providing this support is negotiated by each pair. It may involve transporting a client to appointments, meeting them at the appointment, having a coffee together or talking on the phone.

Program promotion

The program conducted research into barriers to referrals in early 2011, which recommended the further development of the program's promotional materials. The program now has a suite of promotional resources (pamphlets, posters, cards) that are left at strategic points (the NJC, all the relevant police stations, community lawyers and other service providers).

Written material is only one aspect of the program's promotion. Face-to-face promotion with service providers and referrers is also essential and a key function of the coordinator's role. The Coordinators meet with service providers, address staff meetings and speak at networks or local forums. The Coordinators also have contact with key referrers through the program's Steering Committee which meets monthly.

Finding 11:

The Women and Mentoring program has found that building knowledge of the program amongst the local referral network 'takes time'. Promotion of the program requires written promotional material (hard copy and electronic), reinforced by regular, direct contact with stakeholders in the local network (eg. police, lawyers, the court, other service providers) and support from management.

Level / use of resources

The City of Yarra, in the words of Magistrate David Fanning, is 'resource-rich'. It is important to understand this in terms of understanding the experience of the Women and Mentoring Program. Firstly, the program staff are physically located in the Neighbourhood Justice Centre. This provides the program with access to meeting facilities and private interview rooms. It also avails them to easy access to the range of co-located services at the Neighbourhood Justice Centre: legal assistance; counselling; housing support; alcohol and other drug services; mental health assessment; employment and training support; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support; refugees and newly arrived migrants; employment and training support; support for victims of crime as well as mediation and community correctional services.



The program can also easily access the services and the facilities of The Wellington located one block from the Neighbourhood Justice Centre, if that is a more appropriate setting. Interviews with participants for the evaluation, for example, were held at The Wellington.

In addition, there are three police stations in the municipality (Richmond, Collingwood, Fitzroy). The City of Yarra council, which is linked to the program through representation on the Steering Committee, provides services for women, children and families, people with disabilities, young people and older people and links to a range of community services in the municipality. Domestic violence services and health and community services are also well-represented in the municipality.

On a program level, resources have been more limited, operating initially with one part-time Coordinator, and more recently, two part-time Coordinators. The program was envisaged from the start as a two-year pilot, but commenced with only six months secure funding. This funding could only support 12 hours of coordination work per week, and many additional coordinator hours were undertaken on a voluntary basis. Securing additional funding was a major focus for the Coordinator in 2010. Funding was secured from a patchwork of philanthropic sources, including anonymous donations. It was not until the latter part of 2010 that the program secured sufficiently substantial grants to effectively run for the next 12 months in 2011. Insecure funding in the first year made operation of the pilot program very difficult, given that start-up work focuses on relationship building and recruitment of mentors and participants.

The program has operated within budget, but notes that mentors, particularly in the early stages, were reluctant to claim their full expenses.

Finding 12:

The Women and Mentoring program has operated through four grants sourced from three philanthropic trusts and one small government grant. These funds have been supplemented by two anonymous donations. A further grant was awarded for the evaluation research.

Securing and managing funding from a range of sources has created an additional workload for the program that inevitably diverts resources away from program delivery. Lack of secure funding also hampers the capacity to engage mentors and participants and promote the program with any certainty.

Given the level of uncertainty that the program encountered in its first year of operation, the achievements of the program are significant. The program experience underscores the need to secure funding which covers the full implementation costs and enables the program to operate with certainty.

Program Outcomes

What has happened to or for participants as a result of the program?

There would a number of women who I can think of, who would not have been able to change, without the assistance of the Women and Mentoring pilot program because of their inability to attend appointments and constructively engage with services.

Magistrate David Fanning, NJC



She saved me, honestly she did. On one level, providing that practical transport. But also just in giving me confidence. It's so helpful to have someone who knows about my life as it is now, who I can be honest with, but not feel judged. From my point of view, it's better than having a family member. There's no Chinese whispers that happens in family. I don't feel dependent on my mentor. I don't feel judged, but I do feel supported by a friend. Honestly, it's really given me the best possible chances to make good.

Participant

Of the seven current participants in the Women and Mentoring program:

- ♦ All have attended their court hearings.
- ♦ Four are on community-based orders, one has received a custodial sentence, matters for one participant have been deferred and another participant will not require court attendance.
- ♦ Most have attended counselling or other requirements, such as drug testing regimes, with one or two sometimes reluctant.
- ♦ Three participants are awaiting final hearings and two have received community based orders.
- ♦ At least one participant is planning to return to study, one is undertaking volunteer work, and one is seeking to participate in a community arts program.
- ♦ Two have reconnected with family members, a positive move in at least one case.
- ♦ Participants are focussing on their personal goals – which vary from working through their various legal matters, building their independence, focussing on needs of children, dealing with financial issues or simply joining a gym.

All participants are in regular contact with their mentor by phone, text or in person, some for as long as two years. Two participants lost contact – one for a couple of weeks, one for some months – but have since re-connected with their mentors.

Three of the four participants no longer with the program successfully completed their mentorship, with two completing community based orders successfully and one reaching a settlement with no charges. The fourth participant unfortunately disengaged from the program and has secured an alternative support structure.

When asked what difference having a mentor has made, the four participants who were interviewed reported:

- ♦ Feeling supported
- ♦ Having an impartial, non-judgemental friend
- ♦ Having someone to help with everyday matters that they have found challenging
- ♦ Having someone to help them meet their obligations – getting to court, lawyers and accessing other services
- ♦ Having someone there to talk through options – *'Facing life, study, work choices – I will talk to my mentor about these choices. Her feedback has been invaluable.'*

In keeping with the research showing the range of issues female offenders typically deal with, in addition to their contact with the justice system, all four participants interviewed were involved with a range of other services and programs, such as:



- ♦ Alcohol and other drugs counselling
- ♦ Opiate replacement programs and other treatment regimes
- ♦ Family violence support services
- ♦ Financial counselling
- ♦ Psychological counselling
- ♦ General practitioners

The participants (and potential participants) rarely have just one legal problem.

VLA Lawyer

Participants were also dealing with issues such as:

- ♦ Housing
- ♦ Family violence intervention orders, involving additional court matters
- ♦ Child protection matters, involving additional court matters
- ♦ Returning to study or work
- ♦ Depression, anxiety, mental illness

Three of the four participants had pre-school children, two were single parents, two of the four participants were isolated from their families, one through geography, another through estrangement. Those women dealing with family violence matters were also dealing with concerns about young children being exposed to violence. Three of the four participants spontaneously described their sense of being overwhelmed by issues they had to deal with: *'Honestly, I couldn't get out of the house...' 'I would wake up every morning stressing about what to do...' 'I couldn't sleep at night, just worrying about court...'*

(My mentor) has helped me through this time...she helped me get to see a lawyer. With some of my housing issues, she's rung up and just kept going till she got through to a supervisor. Having her there in court, as another pair of eyes and ears is so helpful. Because I was involved with (my mentor) the last time my partner assaulted me...it gave me the extra bit of strength to say 'That's it'. Even though I was scared, I applied for an intervention order.

Participant

One of the key themes evident in the participants' experiences was the deep sense of relief that they had someone there beside them. On one level they appreciated the practical support with navigating the legal system and the other services they were involved with: *'I was really unwell when I started with the program. Really too unwell to go anywhere. Just getting out of bed was hard. I'd lost my licence as well. The mentor arranged to take me to appointments. I had to attend a lot of services. Initially my mentor took me around to a lot of appointments. We've weaned this down now and I'm getting around independently, but she still comes to court with me.'*

On another level, it was just having someone who would call them and suggest that they go out for a coffee or just chat on the phone. While each of the participants was connected to other services, these were siloed, focussing on one aspect of their life where they needed support. With their mentor, participants have the support of one person who understands the full range of personal difficulties they have to deal with, as well as the different professionals and appointments they have to comply with. Mentors reported that, if not for the mentor, *'no one would know how many appointments (the participants) had to attend.'* They observed that participants often felt

Having her on my side – the court can see I am taking my rehabilitation seriously. I understand it's important to show that I'm walking away from old, bad choices – and I'm not just showing up with the same old excuses.

Participant



'over-loaded' with these responsibilities. In their mentoring role, they tried to make sure that participants understood their non-negotiable commitments – 'It's court – you have to go', those that were in their best interests 'You had better speak to your lawyer' and those, that could be re-negotiated.

Participants interviewed all felt that they had made a true friend, acknowledging that this person was a particular type of friend – supportive, aware, non-judgmental, consistent. One participant felt the mentor had 'saved them' and made the difference between coping and not coping with the experience of being charged, although this participant did note that *'If I was without a mentor, I think I would have forced myself to comply with my community based order, but it would have been a real struggle.'* One participant had only recently entered the program, but already felt her mentor had been a *'huge help with everything...she's sometimes been in court three times a week. She's always there, always goes above and beyond.'* Another was more circumspect *'I don't pin all my hopes on my mentor making my life different. The changes are up to me. I don't think one person (the mentor) can change everything. I've made a whole lot of personal choices that weren't good. I have to deal with that now. But the program has given me someone to be beside me as I go.'*

Police, lawyers and Magistrate Fanning all reported that they had observed positive outcomes for participants. Each expressed some caution, firstly, because of the low number of participants in the program. Secondly, attribution of personal achievements for individuals could not rest with the Women and Mentoring program alone. However, the pilot program's key contribution was to break through the barriers that – for whatever reason – prevent some offenders connecting with the services designed to assist them, including connecting with their own legal representatives. Magistrate Fanning observed that *'We perhaps have long thought that it's just a matter of providing the right services. You would think - rationally - that people will, of course, engage in those services, because people act in their own best interests... Well, some people don't. They just don't. Some people, seemingly actively, work against their own self-interest, because of various barriers...'* While lawyers experience frustration when their client does not engage with their legal advocate they *'can't physically knock on people's doors and get them to attend a briefing with their lawyer...however, the support I've seen from the mentors has been outstanding. They make enormous efforts to connect with the participant. Each has been successful, and there is now a remarkable change in the participants...even their demeanor.'*

Police, the lawyer and the magistrate all observed positive change in participants' compliance behaviour. The significance of this for the individuals cannot be overstated - given that the participant group comprises people who struggle to comply with their orders. Once an offender repeatedly fails to comply with a community-based order, they potentially face further and escalating charges, and, as a last resort, the possibility of a prison sentence. Having referred three women to the pilot program (at the time of interview), the VLA lawyer reported that each participant, while intelligent and from 'good' backgrounds, was non-compliant and in turbulent relationships. Each had a partner in the background who was far from ideal, to whom the women were inextricably linked through their children. Through their participation on the program, the women stabilised, felt they had options, were able to deal with their personal issues. The women *'felt supported, enabled...they were encouraged to do things for*

I'm keeping a list of everything attended to show I can commit to an order. I have appointments four out of every five days...financial counselling, drug and alcohol counselling, rehabilitation employment services, pharmacy, and then court dates.

Participant



themselves, but they clearly learnt that the mentors were there to ride the ups and downs with them...It takes time to get into these situations, it takes time to extricate from them as well.'

A number of stakeholders observed that the positive impacts for women extend beyond the individuals. The implications are profound for mothers participating in the program. If a mother is sent to prison, *'it is a burden to the community – there are costs for the family, the child, often the state'*. Having the support of the mentor, who can help when there are appointments involved *'has benefits for the kids...you don't want them to normalise to the court atmosphere.'* Contact with the justice system also impacts on the families of women without children, and mentoring support also reduces this burden.

Participants also gained practical knowledge through the mentorship (*I've learnt about other things available to me that I didn't know. I didn't know if I couldn't get to court that they could give me a taxi voucher*); gained confidence and gained a real sense of how to manage a personal challenge – breaking the problem down, working step by step, being realistic about their own situation, while also making sure that they make choices in their own best interests. On a personal level, they were able to observe their mentor's tenacity and refusal to give up, and where possible, to apply that quality to the challenges faced in their own lives. As one participant said, *Nowadays, I feel fine – positive, but realistic. I wish this wasn't happening to me (facing court), but it is and I have to wear it.* One of the Steering Committee members attributed much of the change to *'the personal attention that helps to turn people around. They start to dress well, attend court hearings, take responsibility for themselves.'*

Finding 13:

The Women and Mentoring pilot has delivered significant benefits to participants, supporting its original hypothesis that building participants' capacity and confidence through mentoring may enable participants to 'manage and move on from the issues that underpin offending behaviours.' Long term outcomes of the pilot are not yet available, but the short- and medium-term results show that this program can make a significant difference to female offenders' capacity to respond to their legal matters, and their coping mechanisms more broadly. The benefits of changes made by participants have also been shown to flow through to children and families.

Just as other research has shown the 'distinctly gendered nature' of women's experience of prison or transition from prison, the experience of this program shows the distinctly gendered nature of women's contact with the justice system. In addition to their charge, all participants were experiencing one or more significant issues in their lives – mental health, addictions, intimate partner violence, financial hardship – significantly reducing their capacity to cope with their legal issues. Most lacked supportive or constructive relationships and in some cases were extremely socially isolated. Most who were parents were sole parents, often concerned about protecting their children from further exposure to violence. The mentoring 'friend with boundaries' has been able to provide support to participants, whatever their circumstances, in a manner that is non-judgmental, encouraging and empowering.



What has happened to or for mentors as a result of the program?

Mentors consulted ranged from those who had been in the role for two years to recent recruits. Their personal and professional backgrounds varied. Some were successful businesswomen or professionals, others were retired or out of the workforce, and some were recent graduates. Mentors were positive about their role, particularly its genuine, practical focus. They felt they were making a real contribution, which they clearly found satisfying. Mentors were attracted to the role for a combination of reasons – a confidence that they could make a difference or an attraction to working in their field of study. The key motivation for each mentor was to support the participant. If this resulted in positive changes in the life of the participant, the level of satisfaction was enhanced. If not, and there have been examples of participants who have been sentenced or left the program, mentors were philosophical. The recent transfer of a mentoring pair to VACRO, so that the mentoring relationship can continue for the duration of the custodial sentence, is another example of the evident commitment mentors bring to the relationship.

It's important to have successful members of the community to help others get through.'

Participant

Other stakeholders felt that there were broader community benefits from a program that enabled volunteer mentors to *'make a contribution to the community and connect to people needing help.'*

What has happened to or for referrers as a result of the program?

Police, community lawyers and Magistrate Fanning all observed that in their roles, they come in contact with a cohort of offenders, variously described as *'very resistant to help'* *'lacking personal support structures or effective support structures'* *'just can't comply with programs'* *'have difficulty organising themselves to attend to very complex needs...struggle to maintain engagement with services.'*

I don't think there would be a judicial officer alive who is not frustrated from time to time with the fact that a person who is before the court has not utilised and engaged with services that are available to that person...so the Women and Mentoring program is a real asset in being able to overcome that lack of engagement.

Magistrate Fanning

Referrers to the program from the justice sector (police, legal, judiciary) identified two key benefits of the Women and Mentoring program for the broader justice system:

- ♦ Reducing or eliminating the frustrations, inefficiencies and expense to the justice system caused by resistant clients, or to frame it positively, supporting the efficiency of the justice system.
- ♦ Providing these agencies / organisations with another 'option' to refer women to.

For us, it is about option setting. Rather than the accused appearing in court unprepared, or not at all, this program gives us other options.

Victoria Police representative

From the perspective of the VLA representative, the program *'bridges the gap between lawyer and the client.'*



Areas for improvement:

Magistrate Fanning felt that further work was required to establish the relationship between the program and the court. He felt that mentors can provide an important point of view for the courts, and therefore 'need to come to court prepared to answer questions from the bench...honest responses, not advocating, fair and balanced views...' would be helpful. This may require further discussions and training for mentors.

Key Stakeholder Perceptions

Key stakeholders perceived that:

- ♦ The pilot is significant because it is the only program of its type known in Victoria – most likely in Australia
- ♦ The pilot has shown clear, mutual benefits to participants and mentors
- ♦ In providing benefits to participants, the pilot also generates flow-on benefits to their children, families, and the wider community
- ♦ The program experience to date shows improvements in court attendance, compliance with orders and improvements in general 'coping' capacity of participants
- ♦ The pilot has shown strong promise as a program model to assist women charged with an offence, who, for a range of reasons, lack the clarity, resources, energy or support to access the services designed to assist them and/or to comply with the conditions of community-based orders, and risk escalating their charges through preventable breaches
- ♦ From the perspective of the justice system, the pilot has shown that this mentoring support facilitates more efficient use of resources and time, through improved compliance
- ♦ The pilot has generated significant learnings about how to develop and implement a program targeted at adult women at point of first being charged
- ♦ The pilot has developed a model for a Women and Mentoring program which could be utilised by other organisations and in other locations, with particular emphasis on the training and development of volunteer mentors
- ♦ The community base of the program has been an important factor in its development.

The Steering Committee and other stakeholders have noted that the program has had limited success attracting participants from groups over-represented in the justice system – Vietnamese women, Indigenous women and women with mental health issues are all over-represented in prison statistics. Working with each of these groups would require further work in cultural tailoring of the program, attraction of appropriate mentors, potentially adjusting the mentor training and the involvement of key stakeholder organisations. In the case of Aboriginal women, it could be posited that the program would need to be managed by a local Aboriginal organisation (and could potentially be informed by the learnings of the Rumbalara Women's Mentoring Program.⁴⁰) Similarly, attracting participants from a CALD community over-represented in the justice system, such as the Vietnamese community, would require strong partnerships with appropriate community-based organisations. This work would require the same

⁴⁰ Smith R *Healthy change at the micro-level-Victoria's Koori Courts*, in Anderson I, Baum F, & Bentley M (eds), *Beyond Band-aids: Exploring the social determinants of Aboriginal health* (2007)



'action learning' approach that under-pinned the work in the pilot and an openness to learn about 'what works' with specific communities.

Continuous improvement processes

The program has operated from an 'action learning' / continuous improvement approach from inception. The program has therefore evolved and grown as it has developed. This would need to be an ongoing feature of the program, both in terms of best practice approaches, and given that the program is still building its knowledge base. Development of a performance management framework would support ongoing continuous improvement.

Program sustainability

The Women and Mentoring program was initiated as a two-year pilot, with a beginning and an end point. In addition to providing mentoring support, one of the purposes of the pilot was to develop an understanding about this unique approach and to document the model. The pilot was not intended to be sustained, but to explore and learn how to establish a sustained program, using this model.

Cost-effectiveness of the program

The pilot Women and Mentoring program has operated on a budget of just over \$100,000 over two years, but this period covered the start-up phase of the pilot when there was a sole Coordinator working part-time and pre-recruitment of mentors and participants. This figure also masks the costs of in-kind support from the NJC and The Wellington. A more realistic figure for the operation of the program is between \$125,000 and \$150,000 per annum. This figure, importantly, would allow the program to:

- ♦ engage two Coordinators, an important requirement for the strength of the program,
- ♦ fully reimburse mentor expenses
- ♦ fund specialised training for mentors
- ♦ provide some contingency funds
- ♦ continue with its continuous improvement approaches in response to new learnings generated by new experiences

The cost of running the program needs to be considered in the context of the costs of *not* running the program. The Council of Australian Governments reports that the average expenditure per prisoner per day in 2009–10 was \$240.66.⁴¹ This equates to an annual expenditure of close to \$90,000 per year. If the program prevents two women entering the prison system for periods of nine months, it has paid for itself. If it achieves greater levels of prevention, it would be saving public funds. Further, non-compliant behaviour resulting in breaches of court orders (often found with this cohort of participants) has significant financial and resource costs for courts, police and legal representatives. Achieving greater compliance and avoiding wasted costs to police, courts and legal practitioners also represents enormous savings to the community and more productive use of resources. The program has two examples of participants, each

⁴¹ <http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/DOJ+Internet/Home/Prisons/Research+and+Statistics/JUSTICE+-+Corrections+Statistics+-+FAQs>



suffering depressive illnesses, who had been struggling with breaches dating back more than ten years. With the support of their mentor, both are now responding to these matters.

Calculating the cost-effectiveness of preventative programs is notoriously difficult for a number of reasons, such as attribution of results and its hypothetical nature. In this case, for example, the Women and Mentoring program is not working in isolation – one of its most significant achievements is ensuring that participants attend and access the service supports required of them and available to them, such as drug and alcohol counselling or financial counselling.

Research on female offenders shows that they are frequently dealing with a multitude of issues, and a multitude of segregated agencies. Incapacity to deal with a plethora of issues, organisations and professionals, leading to breaches and non-compliance, is itself often the reason for escalation of legal matters for female offenders. The Victorian government has recently acknowledged similar difficulties caused by segregation of services for clients of the Department of Human Services. The Department will pilot a new approach allocating 'a single case worker for each person or family, and a single case history to replace multiple files by separate branches of Human Services.'⁴² 'The Case for Change' for this approach 'portrays a dysfunctional bureaucracy in which families can be working with more than 10 social workers in departments specialising in disability or mental health or child protection.'⁴³ This experience is comparable to that of participants in the Women and Mentoring program who are required to access a range of services, often from multiple service providers.

Research on community-based crime prevention strategies also highlight:

- ♦ the costs to the state of imprisoning mothers for non-violent offences
- ♦ the social costs incurred by the children of imprisoned mothers and the state, primarily through increased likelihood of disengaging from education, employment and training and potentially future connection with crime and/or drug use.

Economic evaluations of successful crime prevention and community-based approaches conclude that 'even small reductions in re-offending translate into significant savings.'⁴⁴

In addition, the true cost-effectiveness of the program is not only demonstrated by costs avoided in the justice system. There are also significant contributions to be achieved in assisting women to move from a dysfunctional lifestyle to an engaged and functional lifestyle. This cannot be achieved overnight, and is not necessarily realistic for all participants. However, the program has a range of examples of participants moving to a better functioning lifestyle with one participant now actively volunteering on a regular basis, another contemplating return to study, another enrolling in a community arts program and yet another having completed beauty therapy training. Each of these represents a significant step forward for each of these women. In other cases, one participant has taken steps to extricate herself from a damaging relationship and another is attempting to gain custody of one of her three children currently placed in out of home care. These social capital benefits cannot be over-estimated.

⁴² The Age, *The Case for Change*, Friday 16th December, 2011

⁴³ The Age, *op cit*

⁴⁴ New Economic Foundation, *ibid*, p.4 and Big Brothers, Big Sisters *ibid*, p. 4



Finding 14:

The combination of costs saved through more efficient processing of offences and avoidance of re-issuing of warrants, reduced number of non-attendances at court or meetings with lawyers, reduced number of deferred hearings, greater compliance with orders, reduced severity of sentencing, avoidance of custodial sentences as well as costs saved through better functioning of individuals and their families, indicate that the required investment in the program is minimal in relation to its benefits.

Is the model replicable?

The Women and Mentoring program is well-documented and tested within its current auspice (the Wellington) and setting (the Neighbourhood Justice Centre).

The program's success has been supported by:

- ♦ productive relationships with referrers to the program (eg. police, community-based lawyers, the court and other service providers).
- ♦ the qualities and suitability of the mentors, which in turn relies on the suitability of the recruitment, selection, training and ongoing support provided to the mentor group.
- ♦ the capability of the Coordinator in building relationships and trust with service providers and professional / ethical management of the mentors and the participant groups.

...the project coordinator occupies a key role in the development and operation of a scheme...The foundation of a good scheme would seem to be a strong coordinator who has a clear vision...Not only do such coordinators win trust and respect, but they are better able to negotiate their way around the youth justice system. .

The National Evaluation of the Youth Justice Board's Mentoring Projects, (UK) Youth Justice Board, 2004

Successfully replicating the program is highly dependent on the role of the program's 'driver/s' and their ability to successfully develop and build relationships with the key organisations (eg. the court, police, lawyers, service providers) and their capacity to recruit and support mentors. The pilot has also benefited from the input of Steering Committee members, who between them have extensive experience in community-based women's mentoring programs with a justice focus.

Fundamentally, the program components are well articulated and provide a solid foundation for a replicable model. However, there are 'unknowns' if replicated in another court, local government area or auspice. For example, would the same depth of experience be available to a new Steering Committee? An alternative governance structure would also generate new learnings. As the highlighted quote implies, locating the program within a small organisation presents risks. This report concluded that 'in order to be viable (youth justice mentoring) schemes need to be of a minimum size that can support an internal management structure of more than one experienced member of staff.'⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Youth Justice Board, *The National Evaluation of the Youth Justice Board's Mentoring Projects*, University of Surrey, 2004, p.53



Other unintended outcomes

The pilot has shown that the program provides the platform for a network of services, with an interest in the needs of female offenders, to meet to discuss the operation of, and improvements to, the service system. It also provides the means for service providers to network and share knowledge.



Conclusions

The Wellington's pilot Women and Mentoring program concludes its two-year testing phase showing that it has developed a viable model for its operation. The pilot program has gained the support of the magistrate, lawyers and the police, based on their observation of the positive impacts for participants. Their support is also based on the program's capacity to reduce the number of breaches, non-appearances or unprepared appearances and avoid the inefficiencies and significant costs this represents to the justice system. Other service providers, in intersecting areas such as local government, health and offender support, are supportive of the program.

Most significantly, the active participants – the voluntary mentors and adult women charged with offences in the local area – are enthusiastic supporters of the program.

The pilot has tested an approach that best information suggests is unique in Australia – that of providing community-based mentoring support provided by a team of volunteers for women at the point of being charged with an offence. The program has run on a modest budget, but the emerging outcomes show that providing this intervention at a critical time enables this cohort of offenders to attend to their charges, comply with their orders and take steps to engage with the services that will assist them to address the root causes of their offending. On a personal level, the support has also enabled participants to make real and significant differences to their lifestyles. As even small reductions in re-offending translate into significant savings, the pilot outcomes indicate that the program provides a promising approach, where the benefits far outweigh the costs. To date, two participants of fourteen participants have proceeded to a custodial sentence. In contrast, other participants are finally dealing with charges that date back over ten years. Further, with seven mothers participating in the program, who between them have twelve children (under the age of 18), positive interventions in the mothers' lives can have direct impacts on the lives of the next generation.

The cost of running the program needs to be considered in the context of the costs of *not* running the program. The Council of Australian Governments reports that the average expenditure per prisoner per day in 2009–10 was \$240.66.⁴⁶ This equates to an annual expenditure of close to \$90,000 per year. If the program prevents two women entering the prison system for periods of nine months, it has paid for itself. If it achieves greater levels of prevention, it would be saving public funds. Achieving greater compliance and avoiding wasted costs to police, courts and legal practitioners also represents enormous savings to the community and more productive use of resources.

The program has developed and documented its model of operation, further supported by the documentation of the model in this evaluation. The program's approach to mentoring is consistent with good mentoring practices. The model documents the processes for selection of mentors and recruitment of participants, and pays particular attention to providing support to mentors through induction, training, group meetings and supervision. The program has been able to attract a group of highly committed and skilled mentors.

⁴⁶ <http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/DOJ+Internet/Home/Prisons/Research+and+Statistics/JUSTICE+-+Corrections+Statistics+-+FAQs>



While the program model is now more fully articulated, it has only been tested within the setting of the City of Yarra, and more recently in its co-location at the Neighbourhood Justice Centre. This is a unique justice setting and not typical of the operation of other magistrate's courts. The model requires further testing and adaptation if it were to be located in another jurisdiction in order to respond to new and different local situations (eg. establishing relationships with the key partners).

The pilot program has demonstrated a significant promising approach, using a unique model. However, as a pilot that has reached fewer than 20 participants and with less than two years full operation, the Steering Committee acknowledges that the program model is still evolving. In order to have greater certainty about the robust nature of the model, it requires further time, monitoring of participants to identify their longer term outcomes, more participants and mentors, greater cultural diversity in the participant and mentor base, and in the longer term, testing in other localities and courts.

At this point, the pilot results present a strong case for moving from a 'pilot' to a 'program' and retaining this unique model. The evaluation has highlighted some key areas to focus on for the future such as – more comprehensive documentation of the model, further investigation and documentation of participant outcomes and development of an evaluation and monitoring system. With its preventative / diversionary focus, the program also needs to investigate how best to attract women from communities or groups over-represented in the local justice system. Moving to a stronger infrastructure base, potentially through a consortium of agencies with a common interest in 'making a difference', and experience working with specific target groups, would give the program greater strength.



Recommendations

The following recommendations inform the next steps for the pilot program and possible future directions. The recommendations have been informed by the evaluation data and a specific workshop conducted by the evaluators with the Women and Mentoring Pilot Program Steering Committee to discuss the options for future directions for the pilot project.

On this basis, it is recommended that:

1. The pilot Women and Mentoring program is formally concluded with a public celebration that acknowledges the program's achievements for participants, mentors and the local service system. The significant contribution of the pilot to the knowledge base of effective interventions for women in the justice system should also be celebrated and acknowledged.
2. The evaluation findings and report are used for providing the case for moving from a 'pilot' to a 'program'. Funding should be sought at realistic levels (at least \$125,000–\$150,000 per annum) for a period of at least two years to ensure that program operation is not distracted by the need to source further funds. Partners should have the capacity to contribute to the operation of the program.
3. A working party is established immediately to implement Recommendation 2. As one of its first tasks, the working party should develop a six-month action plan to secure funding for the program. The working party should ensure that this momentum is maintained, so that the goodwill, involvement and expertise of the mentors is retained.
4. Interim responsibility for the current active participant group is to be transferred to VACRO. VACRO will provide support to mentors and participants during the transition period from pilot to program.
5. Developmental work to the model be undertaken to include program logic, monitoring and evaluation framework and tools so as to increase the model's application.
6. The Women and Mentoring model is documented so that the important learnings about this unique approach add to the knowledge base of the women and justice field and are promoted to key interest groups: the judiciary, the legal fraternity, the police, community services, the health promotion sector and evaluation professionals. This knowledge should be shared through articles in academic journals, professional journals, conference presentations and mainstream press.
7. A media promotion strategy on the Women and Mentoring program be developed to promote the achievements and benefits of the program. The promotion strategy to provide promotional material to assist in targeting potential funding opportunities. (See Attachment 4 for an example of a draft mainstream press article, using the 'Two of Us' approach.)
8. The Wellington Inc undertakes strategic work to develop a consortium of local partners. The purpose of the consortium is two-fold: to provide greater infrastructure support to the program, and secondly, to work with CALD-specific agencies and programs, in particular agencies working with women from groups who are over-represented in the justice system.



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Women and Mentoring: Evaluation Framework			
Program Components	Key Research Questions	Evidence sources	Methods
Overall program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Is there a clear rationale for the program? ♦ Are the program's aims and objectives articulated? ♦ What are the strengths, weaknesses and critical success factors of the overall model? ♦ How well is the program managed and coordinated? ♦ Is the program using best practice processes? ♦ Are there opportunities for sustainable improvements? ♦ How well is the model documented (eg. eligibility criteria, referral and feedback pathways, mentoring training, program brochures and publicity, risk assessment, policies and procedures? Is the model replicable? 	Program manager Steering committee Referrers Key stakeholders Program documentation	Semi-structured interview Document analysis
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Is the program operating with an adequate level of resources? Are resources utilised efficiently? ♦ Is the program reaching mentees in the target group? ♦ Is the program reaching mentors? ♦ Are the right supports available for mentees and mentors, when and where required? ♦ How effective is the suitability assessment process? What improvements may be required? ♦ How well do the referral pathways operate? Has the program been effectively promoted? ♦ Are the referral pathways operating effectively? 	Program manager Key informants including Victoria Police and relevant court and legal services Mentors Program documentation	Semi-structured interviews Group discussion Data analysis
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ What has happened as a result of the program – intended and unintended outcomes - for: ♦ Mentees ♦ Mentors ♦ Referrers (eg. police, community legal) ♦ Wellington Collingwood Inc ♦ NJC ♦ Other stakeholders? ♦ How is the program viewed by key stakeholders? ♦ What is the 'drop out' rate from the program (mentees or mentors)? Are characteristics common to those who leave the program? Is there a trend evident? What are the characteristics of women with the greatest success stories? Are there characteristics common to this group? ♦ How do the successes and short-comings of the program feed back into continuous improvement processes? ♦ How sustainable are the program outcomes – 	Key informants views: Magistrates / court staff Legal profession (community and private) Victoria Police Nominated representatives Steering committee Mentees Mentors Program data eg. # mentors / mentees / matched pairs; # mentor training sessions / meetings; # mentor / mentee meetings Mentee outcome	Semi-structured interview Survey Group discussion Survey / interview Survey / interview Group discussion Data analysis

Women and Mentoring: Evaluation Framework			
Program Components	Key Research Questions	Evidence sources	Methods
	<p>within current arrangements?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ How cost-effective is the program? What are the costs of running the program? What are the costs of <i>not</i> running the program? ♦ What, if any, have been the unintended outcomes of the program? 	<p>data:</p> <p>Court outcomes; other outcomes – positive / negative</p> <p>Control group outcome data</p> <p>Program financial data Other relevant financial data (eg. unit costs for incarceration; follow up of offences) Cost-benefit analysis</p>	<p>Cost-benefit analysis Cost-effectiveness analysis Return on investment analysis</p>



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The Wellington Centre Women and Mentoring Program Evaluation

Dear Participant

We would like to invite you to participate in the evaluation of The Wellington Centre's *Women and Mentoring Program*. The aim of the evaluation is to find out how the program 'makes a difference' to participants.

This handout provides information about the evaluation and how we would like you to be involved.

Why is this evaluation important?

Because the Wellington Centre's Women and Mentoring Program is a pilot program exploring a new approach, it is really important to find out what participants think and their experiences. The information you provide will help the Wellington Centre improve the program.

As a new experience for you, you may also find it useful to talk about participating in the Women and Mentoring Program, and what it means to you.

Who is conducting the evaluation?

Effective Change Pty Ltd has been engaged to conduct the *Evaluation of the Women and Mentoring Program* for the Wellington Centre Inc. Effective Change is a professional research and management consultancy organisation that has been providing services to the government and non-government sectors since 1993. Clare Keating is the project consultant.

What does the evaluation involve?

The consultants will contact participants to find out their thoughts about their mentorship. The consultants will also talk to:

- ♦ Mentors about the program
- ♦ Others about the program (not about individual participants) such as the Neighbourhood Justice Centre, the Victoria Police, the City of Yarra and community representatives. These organisations and representatives are involved in referring participants to the program or participate on the program's Steering Committee and their views are also important.

How will participants be involved in the evaluation?

Participants can choose to:

- ♦ complete a survey OR
- ♦ be interviewed by the consultant at the Wellington Centre.

If you chose to be interviewed at The Wellington Centre, your mentor will introduce you to Clare Keating, the evaluation consultant and ensure that you are comfortable with the process. Then they will leave so that you can be interviewed on your own. The interview will take around 30 minutes.

Effective Change would like to interview you at a time convenient to you in the next couple of weeks. Then we would like to interview you again in October to find out how the mentorship is going.

Clare Keating consultant will be at the Wellington Centre for interviews on:

- ♦ Monday 12th September from 12.30pm
- ♦ Tuesday 13th September from 12.30pm
- ♦ Monday 19th September from 12.30pm

We will confirm arrangements for interviews (or surveys) with you through your mentor.

What questions will participants be asked?

- ♦ How did you get to participate in this program? (eg. Did you find the program? Or were you referred by someone, eg. police, court or community agency?)
- ♦ Can you tell me a little of your story? What sorts of issues are you facing? (You are only asked to share information that you are comfortable sharing.)
- ♦ The mentorship program is described as mentors 'walking alongside' participants. At this stage, do you feel you have someone 'walking alongside' you?
- ♦ Is your mentor helping you? If yes, how? If not, what would you like your mentor to do?
- ♦ What do you hope will happen to you by being part of this mentorship?
- ♦ Has anything positive happened so far through being part of this mentorship?
- ♦ How would you describe the way you feel about your life circumstances at the moment?

How will the information from participants be used?

The information you provide will be **confidential**. No information identifying you will be included in the evaluation report. All information will be stored securely by the consultants and then the information will be shredded.

Do I have to participate in the evaluation?

No. You are not obliged to participate in the evaluation.

What happens if I change my mind?

You can withdraw from the evaluation at any time. This will not affect your mentorship in any way.

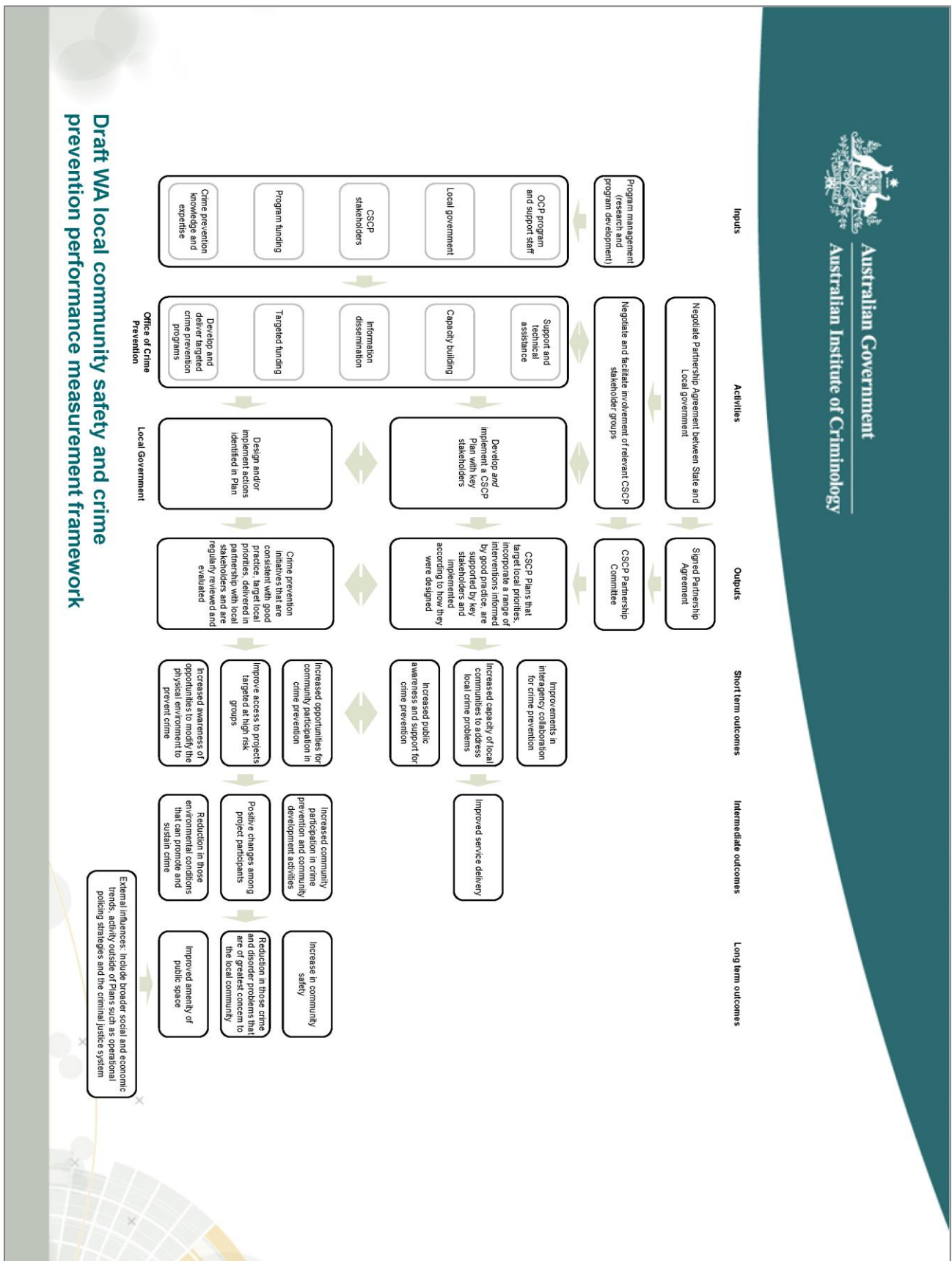
Can I see the report on the Evaluation?

At the completion of the evaluation, a summary of the evaluation will be available from the Wellington Centre. Your mentor can give you a copy if you are interested.

Further questions

If you have any queries, please contact Clare Keating at Effective Change:

Clare Keating	clarekeating@effectivechange.com.au
Effective Change	Ph: 9388 1661



Source: Australian Institute of Criminology

How do I know it worked?

Measuring the effectiveness of crime prevention in Australia

Presentation: Peter Homel

Principal Criminologist – Crime Prevention, 23 Nov 2011-12-20

Slide: 20