

NCOSS Conference
“Scales of Justice?”
24-25 July 2002
**Population Groups in Prison
- Women Inmates**

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Some Demographics
The Hidden Statistics

- Total inmate population ~ 7800
 - Female ~7%
- Female centres = 3
- Purpose-built female centres = nil
- Dedicated female program units = nil
- 1896 - Comptroller General of Prisons recommended purpose-built centre for women

Some Demographics 2

The Hidden Statistics

- Increase in total inmate population ~19%
 - Female ~66% (1995-2001)
- 95% of women enter custody at Mulawa
 - 2nd highest reception rate of all NSW centres
- Mulawa population increased 50% since 1997
- Projected increase 100-200 female receptions, 2002-2004

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Socioeconomic Demographics of Inmates

- Unemployment prior to custody ~ 50%
 - Females 75%; primary income paid work <20%
- Did not achieve School Certificate ~ 50%
- Rental accommodation before custody ~54%
 - Females 64%; unable return prior housing >50%
- Aboriginality total inmate population ~17%
 - Females 26%

EDOCC Score ~ 790 (National average 1000)

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Demographics of Female Inmates

- Have children 70%: average 2-3
- Sole parent 30%
- Pregnant 3-5%
- Removed from family as a child ~33%
- Itinerant lifestyles ~20%
- Experience of abuse as a child >50%
- Prior custody >60%
- Age <25 years - 32%, <50 years - 96%

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Mental Health Issues for Women in Custody

- 50% contact with mental service in last year
 - 47% major depression, 5% bipolar disorder, 14% psychosis (12 month prevalence)
- Approx. twice male rates
- Intellectual disability 10-20%
- Sequelae of abuse and child sexual assault
- Separation from children and families

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Drug and Alcohol Issues for Women in Custody

- Opioid >90%
- Amphetamine ~45%
- Alcohol 17%
- Cannabis 20%
- Minor tranquillisers/sedatives 25%
- Drug-induced psychosis increasing
- Methadone maintenance 40%

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Other Health Issues for Women in Custody

- Blood borne communicable disease/sepsis
- Smoking
- Metabolic disorders
- Oral health
- Sexual and reproductive health
 - High-risk pregnancies
 - Sexually transmissible infections
 - Cervical premalignancy
- Health access issues

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Barriers for Health Providers

- Short stays: 27% <8 days; 17% 8-30 days; 56% >30 days; only 10% >6months
- Frequent movements
- Custodial imperatives
- Legal “priorities” 70% on remand
- Shared duty of care/ confidentiality
- Consent/ “volunteerism”
- Limitations of the environment
- Access/ frequent lock-downs
- Deficiencies in pre- and post-release plans

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