THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

Report by

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Project:

To study strategies aimed at breaking the cycle of offending behaviour in families.
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INTRODUCTION

For prisoners’ families the impact of imprisonment can be traumatic. Prisoners’ families suffer many deprivations when a parent or partner is imprisoned. My study has enabled me to investigate strategies developed and implemented in other countries that address the needs of families, particularly children, who are often the invisible victims of crime.

I am most grateful to the Churchill Trust who enabled me to travel to Canada, America and the United Kingdom to meet with people who are committed to working with prisoners and their families. Through this opportunity I was able to experience programs specifically developed for a marginalised group of people and learn of intervention strategies undertaken by organisations in other countries.

I also wish to acknowledge the generous support and encouragement of The Victorian Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, its Council and staff.

Of course, the support and hospitality afforded me by the many people I met during my travels was an invaluable resource enabling me to undertake the research project.

I remain thankful, and entirely encouraged by the generosity of staff and clients, here and overseas, and pledge myself to work towards the creation of a more just and humane correctional system.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During my years working with prisoners and their families I have come to recognise that prisoners’ families are often the silent victims of crime. This is particularly so for the children. I have seen generational offending patterns occur and witnessed children of prisoners themselves end up in the prison system. This led to my interest in programs that address the needs of prisoners’ families and provide intervention strategies aimed at preventing generational offending. Additionally, my interest has focused on programs that uphold the notion that prisoners who have family support throughout the prison sentence and post release period are less likely to re-offend.

The Churchill Fellowship program has enabled further insight and knowledge into correctional initiatives. In particular it has provided the impetus for the design and implementation of a program for Victorian prisons that has the potential to interrupt the cycle of offending and enhance family ties. It is my belief that if we, as a society, are going to work with prisoners and their families to effect change and to promote crime prevention, resources and energy must be directed toward working specifically with children.

As part of the Fellowship I was privileged to visit and participate in programs across three countries. One program of special significance to the Victorian prison system was the ‘Match’ (Mothers and their Children) and ‘Patch’ (Poppas and their Children) program conducted in the Bexar County Jail (BCJ) in San Antonio, Texas. The program focused on parenting and relationships between prisoners and their children. The Match/Patch program has been in existence for eleven years in the Bexar County Jail and has been evaluated on numerous occasions. Each evaluation has been positive in its conclusion, clearly demonstrating the positive outcome the program continues to have on prisoner/parent relationships.

My aim is to see a suitably modified version of the Match / Patch program implemented in all Victorian prisons. The program has the potential to positively impact on the family unit and transcend the prison walls to the community. It would also have the effect of consolidating the plethora of prison programs into what would be a therapeutic community, focusing on family relationships within a prison. Having a Match / Patch program in all prisons would create a pathway that would enable transition from prison to prison to be made without losing the benefit of the program. The link to the community would be through the establishment of a program conducted by ex-prisoners with the support of specialized staff.
BACKGROUND:

Prisoners' families represent a marginalised group within our society. Whilst victims of crime are recognised as a group requiring support in the community (and rightly so), the families of prisoners are tainted by the crimes of their family member. They are the invisible victims of crime. They come from all spheres of life with the common bond being that they all have a family member or significant other in the prison system.

The impact of imprisonment on families can be profound. There is stigma attached to having a family member in prison with families often experiencing feelings of shame and guilt. Borne out of fear and ignorance too often the general reaction of the community is to judge a prisoner’s family and deem them guilty by association.

The most accurate description of the feelings expressed by families can be likened to the stages of grief identified by Elizabeth Kubler Ross. Her book, *Death and Dying*, clearly outlines the stages of grief associated with the death of a loved one. Prisoners’ families often experience similar stages when a family member is imprisoned. Imprisonment of a partner or adult child results in a true form of grief. The difference for our families is that their loved one is not dead but imprisoned.

When a person dies in our culture there are rituals performed, comfort offered and sympathy and support given to the family. When someone enters the prison system there are no rituals for the family to embark upon. They must learn to survive and cope in a totally new environment, which can be both threatening and confusing. Frequently, families are not offered support but are feared and abhorred.

VACRO does not condone any behaviour that results in people being charged, found guilty of a crime in a court of law and subsequently sentenced to a period of imprisonment. This is clearly not our role, nor do we collude with families who are in denial of an offence having taken place. Our service offers counselling and support to enable families to explore, some times in conjunction with the prisoner, what it was that led them to this point in their lives and what can be done to realistically best address the situation.

VACRO works with prisoners and their families by providing services aimed at supporting and addressing the needs of the family unit. There is sufficient research to support the premise that prisoners who have family support during imprisonment and in the post release period have the greatest chance of not re-offending and/or returning to prison. Families can support and enable ex-prisoners to successfully navigate the difficult road back into the community provided they themselves have been supported.

Family support does not happen in a vacuum. There are many hurdles to overcome and decisions to be made, often requiring very painful and difficult choices. Stigma must be endured and feelings of shame need to be addressed. Financial hardship for the family is usually another factor of imprisonment.
To enable the complexity of issues to be addressed, a professional relationship based on mutual trust must be established between the family worker and the family.

Imprisonment has a ripple effect, primarily on significant others attached to the prisoner, be it partners, Mothers, Grandparents, siblings and/or their children. The effect of imprisonment reaches into the community through cost to schools, hospitals, welfare agencies, and taxpayers. To imprison a person in our system costs approximately $40,000 per year. Add to that costs incurred in the community associated with prisoners’ families and it becomes an extremely expensive sanction that in most cases is not effective. Imprisonment is both costly financially and emotionally and given that the recidivism rate is around the 75% mark, it is not a sanction that works.

I believe that these issues are best addressed within a structured and professional program with an intimate knowledge of all areas of the prison. The potential to intervene in the generational offending pattern is dependent upon a number of stages. Namely, the establishment of a non-judgmental relationship with the family, a working knowledge of all aspects of the prison system, knowledge of the whole family unit, and finally the expertise to provide the appropriate support and programs. Hence the need for research prior to program development incorporating the knowledge gained whilst on the Churchill Fellowship.

VACRO family support services facilitate programs that assist families to face the road ahead, the opportunity is given to learn new skills, discover new strengths and continue their lives.
PROGRAMS AND AGENCIES VISITED

California: The Centre for Children of Incarcerated Parents
Director: Dr Denise Johnston
Location: Pacific Oaks College, Pasadena

The aim of my stay in California was to meet with the Director of The Centre for Children of Incarcerated Parents, Dr Denise Johnston. Dr Johnston is the author of many papers relating to children of offenders and is the co-editor of a book pertinent to prisoners' children. The Centre is based at Pacific Oaks College in Pasadena.

The primary reason for visiting Dr Denise Johnstone was to learn more of the research she has conducted concerning prisoners' children, as there is limited research available in Australia relating to the impact of imprisonment on children. It is a gap that VACRO has long recognised and has recently been granted funding to conduct a Needs Assessment for Prisoners' Children.

In Victoria at this time, on reception into the prison system, there is no information collected relating to whether the prisoner is a parent, how many children he/she may have, if the prisoner was the primary care-giver and if so who is now caring for the children. Given that the majority of prisoners are parents I believe we are missing vital information which has the potential to impact on the prisoner, both during the time of imprisonment and their subsequent release. In turn this impacts on the family left outside, especially children who often display symptoms of trauma associated with the loss of a parent. The prison population in Victoria currently stands at approximately 3000.

Dr Johnston was able to provide information and direction that will benefit future research directed at identifying the needs of prisoners' children.

California: Friends Outside In Los Angeles County. (FOLAC)
Director: Ms Mary Weaver.
Main Office: Pasadena
Satellite Offices: Los Angeles and Long Beach

The agency is a non-profit organisation serving families affected by incarceration and their incarcerated/formally incarcerated loved ones.
Mission: Friends Outside in Los Angeles County form a bridge between families, children and prisoners affected by the unintentional consequences of incarceration and provides the support and services necessary to address their immediate and long-term needs.
Programs provided:
Information on prisons and jails; locating inmates, making visits to institutions, location of institutions
Referrals/placements; Referrals to other community resources, placement into drug and alcohol treatment
Emotional support; Peer counselling, Support Groups, Group activities, including the Annual Holiday Party
Advocacy; Between you and the criminal justice system, Between prisoners and community resources
Transportation Assistance; Bus tokens, taxi vouchers
Employment; Job placement, Federal bonding program

All services are provided free of charge. County Supervisorial Districts IV and V, the City of Los Angeles and Long Beach, the Pasadena Foundation, the Inmate Welfare Fund and numerous private donors provide funding. The organisation has been providing services since 1972. FOLAC operates on a budget of approximately American $200,000. Organisational structure: The organisation has a board of management, a staff of seven including Ms Weaver and one hundred volunteers.

It was interesting to note that a significant issue for the Director and the organisation as a whole is that current staff are not formally qualified. VACRO was in a similar position 6 years ago and took steps to ensure that new staff members were appropriately qualified. The professionalism of the agency was/is seen as crucial to obtaining ongoing funding and in providing credibility within the sphere of the programs offered. There are difficulties associated with taking that direction, mainly the additional salary costs and the change often viewed by existing staff as a threat to the agency and themselves.

Strategies aimed at addressing change within a small community organisation were exchanged. An area of interest to the director, Ms Weaver, is the manner in which programs provided by VACRO focused on particular needs and thereby developed an expertise in areas other than crisis intervention. Discussion also centred on the difficulty of having prisoners' families recognised as victims of crime and the importance of community education.

Detroit, USA
American Corrections Conference.
The ACA Conference is an international forum looking at both prison policy and programs.

Workshops attended:
1. Strength based Practice for Juvenile Justice: This workshop presented strategies for raising offender motivation and co-operation. Presented by Michael Clark, MSW, CSW Srn Juvenile Court Officer, Ingham County – 30th Judicial Circuit Court, Family Division, Lansing, Michigan.

This workshop presented a strategy worthy of further investigation. Often our client group emits feelings of hopelessness, its all too hard, and statements of "I cant manage".
All too often we see clients who feel stuck. The Strength based method of working concentrates on the strengths of the client rather than simply trying to fix the presenting problem in isolation. It is a method often partially practiced by social workers without the benefit of a structured model. There is real potential to adapt this theory to working with adult prisoners, families and children of offenders.

"The strengths perspective does not require helper to blithely ignore a client's concerns, problems, illnesses and conflicts. It demands, instead, that they be understood in a larger context of individual and communal resources and possibilities. At the least, the strengths perspective obligates workers to understand that, however downtrodden or sick, individuals have survived (and in some cases even thrived). They have taken steps, summoned up resources, and coped. We need to know what they have done, how they have done it, what they have learned from doing it, who was involved in doing it, what resources (inner and outer) were available in their struggle to surmount their troubles. People are always working on their situations, even if just deciding to be resigned to them: as helpers we must tap into that work, elucidate it, find and build on its possibilities. Maybe in some contexts, even resignation is a sign of strength. Who is to say until we are with the client in that moment"? (pp. 171-172)


I will continue to communicate with Michael Clarke. He has suggested a number of resources that would provide a clear framework for the strength-based model. I will pursue the notion of having Michael come to Australia to present training workshops and to be a keynote speaker at a conference based around families and corrections.

2. Real Justice: Family Group Conferences:

Real Justice Family Group Conferences are also referred to as community conferences. The concept is to foster empathy to offenders and help victims address their emotional needs. The NSW Police in Wagga Wagga have used Conferencing successfully in Australia. This is not family mediation, or victim / offender mediation. My interest in the program stems from the idea that the concept may be of value in VACRO's work with prisoners and their families and involve their support networks in the community. The premise of the program is that it enables offenders to witness the impact of their crime by listening to those most affected. This seems to have possibilities in working with our client group, especially for children of prisoners experiencing problems associated with their parents imprisonment. Conferencing would provide an opportunity for children and partners to voice their feelings to the prisoner parent and for the prisoner to speak of where he/she is at and how they feel. This fosters the opportunity for everyone to tell what they did, how they feel, hear from those they have affected, and participate in deciding how to repair the harm and hurt caused by actions. This, for the children may aid them to explore feelings of abandonment, confusion, anger etc. caused by the imprisonment of a parent. The conferences also encourage wider participation by others that have a significant role in the families life. These people may be school
counsellors, foster care parents, grandparents, protection workers or any other people who may be of significance to the family. There will need to be some adaptation of the program to fit our needs but the basic concept has the potential for a model to be designed specifically to address the needs of prisoners and their family relationships.

Recognition is given to Mr Terry O'Connell, Churchill Fellow, for the conception and development of the program.

**Michigan, USA:**
**Scott Women’s Prison.**

The prison visit was arranged through the ACA conference. The prison held 1000 inmates, both remand and sentenced. The majority of the inmates were African Americans. The ratio of Prison Officer to Prisoner was approximately 1:88. The prison visit allowed some comparison between Victorian prisons and the American model. Women in Victorian prisons have access to far more programs than this American prison. There was also an over representation of African Americans in Scott Women’s Prison.

**Michigan:**  **Project Seek (Services to Enable and Empower Kids)**  
**Co-Ordinator:** Ms Carol Burton  
**Office:** Flint, Michigan

Project Seek is a home based intervention, which offers services to meet the diverse needs of participating families. The target population is children aged between birth and 10 years (at intake) who have a parent in state prisons. The program is located within a large community health centre which provides medical, dental, psychotherapy, a Families First Program, and foster care services. The programs within the health centre ensure continuity of service for clients in the same building as Project Seek.

**Services available:** Home visiting, case management, tutoring, facilitating communication with the inmate, advocating for children and caregivers with other service systems, health care, financial assistance in times of crisis, and support groups for children, caregivers and inmates.

The program works on a case management model ensuring basic needs are met, be it within Project Seek or in conjunction with another agency.

There is an adolescent program that is based on a preventative model and provides support and a mentoring program for adolescents with a parent in jail. Staff conduct groups for the adolescents after school. To facilitate attendance at the groups the teenagers are provided with taxis from school to the centre and then to their home after the group. I attended a number of sessions with the female teenagers and found the enthusiasm for the group infectious. The group centred on raising the self-esteem and awareness of the girls, and provided ongoing assertiveness training. The girls were assessed by the Social Workers as being in need of protection and/or in high risk of
offending, or had already committed an offence. All the participants had a parent in prison, usually serving 7 or more years and the girls were not necessarily living at home. They may be in care situations or in a delinquent program but were still clients of Project Seek.

Separate groups for male adolescents were also facilitated on a similar model. Program Seek provides support on a long-term basis. The caseworker may continue to work with the family in the home or in groups for a number of years. A major reason for the long contact with the family was the number of adolescent children of the prisoner were themselves facing charges or had spent some time in jail. There was also a program for teenage fathers in the program.

A concern discussed with the co-ordinator of the project was the difficulty faced by staff in attachment to children over the years of working with families with both staff and clients experiencing separation issues.

The program worked well as a home based project because of the density of the population within a relatively small area. The difficulty with implementing a similar program in Victoria would be the diversity of locations in which our client group resides.

Canada:
The Elizabeth Fry Society of Canada.
Toronto

This agency worked exclusively with female ex-offenders. The agency provided post release accommodation for 18 women within a building that also provided office space for the organisation. The premises were staffed on a 24-hour roster.

The majority of the women in the program had issues relating to drug and alcohol and also tended to have a history of abuse. They were usually on parole and staying with the Elizabeth Fry Society as part of their parole conditions. Speaking with the participants in the program they reported that the program definitely increased the probability of successfully completing their parole.

The agency has recently purchased nearby individual units that will allow the women to move out into the community post parole but will be encouraged to maintain contact with the staff at the society and continue to participate in programs. A contractual agreement to participate in programs was necessary in order to stay in a unit.

Canada
The Elizabeth Fry Society (EFS)
Vancouver
Director, Mr Robert LaBanc
This program differed significantly from all other EFS programs because it worked with both male and female prisoners and their families. The program also worked with specific cultures, mainly native Canadians, Chinese and Vietnamese. The service was provided to families on an outreach basis with some work also done on site. The average time spent with clients was 6 weeks after which they were referred to other services. There was also a support group conducted for each ethnic group.

The program focus was crisis intervention. The main frustration expressed by staff was the short time available to work with families.

Texas: Match / Patch Program
Director: Ms Juliana Perez
Location: Bexar County Adult Correctional Centre, San Antonio

The Match/Patch Program (MPP) is a prison based program which recognises and promotes the needs of prisoners’ children through structured contact between prisoner parent and the children and by the provision of education in all aspects of parenting for the prisoners.

Prisoners apply to participate in the program and are assessed by the staff and classified as to their suitability. A major part of the criteria for acceptance into the program is the type of offence committed. Sex offenders are not permitted to participate in the program and those who have committed violent crimes are assessed thoroughly prior to a decision being made. There is a waiting list for the program.

The program operates from the Bexar County Adult Correctional Centre, (BCACC), located in San Antonio. There are 4500 male inmates and 300 female. The inmate population was predominately Hispanic and African Americans.

The male inmates participating in the Patch Program were housed in the same unit. This was viewed as very important by the Match / Patch Co-ordinator, Ms Juliana Perez. The constancy of the men being together established a trust between them and they supported each other in expressing their feelings in a ‘safe’ environment. This is unlike the general prison population where emotions are closely guarded for fear of being seen as vulnerable.

Unfortunately, women prisoners at BCACC could not be housed together. The women’s prison is situated in what was originally an old warehouse that has been converted to a jail. This is an annexe to the BCACC and is situated across the road from the main jail. 700 men are also housed in the annexe. All accommodation in the annexe is dormitory style and the women were constantly moved around to preclude alliances being formed.

The Match / Patch program is staffed by a co-ordinator, one prison officer (who is permanently assigned to the program and participates in the groups and classes) and two senior social workers. Student placements are encouraged mainly from the Social Work departments of local Universities. Volunteers form a vital part of the Match/ Patch program. Volunteers play an important role in the program with a diverse age range to
reflect extended families in the community. Grandparents are especially encouraged to be volunteers.

Outside community agencies facilitate classes for the program, at no cost. A very diverse range of people from organisations facilitate groups, an example is a singing group that is very popular with the women. The program is based on educating the participants in a number of diverse areas including parenting, spirituality, team building and has a focus on raising self esteem. Domestic violence, sexual abuse, AIDS education are some of the other programs given by groups who donate their time to the program.

In the early stages of the program many community groups were invited to provide groups or classes but only a few agreed to do so. As time has progressed and the program has become established and credible there are more offers to present programs than can be catered for from outside agencies.

MPP staff facilitate the core programs and also advocate on behalf of the prisoners with outside groups, especially child protection agencies. They also provide intensive one to one counselling with the participants. All participants must sign a contract agreeing to the terms of the program. They must attend all classes, be on time, actively participate to the best of their ability, and be willing to participate in the group processes. The men were not called to classes but have the responsibility to be up, dressed and have their cells tidied in time for class. The women have to be called because of the layout of the annexe and it is often difficult for them to access freely the Patch program area.

If a prisoner receives more than 3 ‘write ups’ (reports for prison misconduct) in a 90-day period they are automatically removed from the program and placed back into general population. This is a rare occurrence with inmates, especially those who have been viewed by classification as ‘trouble’. This group of prisoners become less of a management problem whilst on the program.

When a person is first accepted into the program they must attend a one week parenting group prior to having a Patch / Match children’s visit. The Match / Patch Children’s visit program is conducted quite separately from normal prison visits. The prisoner’s children arrive at the prison at a specified time of the weekend with their parent/care giver. Only the children attend the visits, the parent / caregiver does not accompany the children on the visit. Initially I could not understand why the children attended the visits without the caregiver/parent. The ‘children only’ visit is pivotal to the program for the inmate parent/grandparent who then has the chance to solely direct their attention to the children. This requires the adult relating to and playing with the children for the entire visit. The eligibility age for the children is between 0-16 years. Teenagers have to dress appropriately and ensure that clothing is not viewed as provocative. Short shorts, crop tops or clothing seen as a provocative style of dress is not permitted.

The children are signed in for the special visit and are then given over to Match / Patch staff and volunteers. Program staff then escort them to the visiting area that is used exclusively for the program. The inmates have decorated the room, wonderful children’s
murals have been painted on the walls. Books and toys appropriate for different age groups are provided.

The process for the children is simple yet effective. The children are asked to remove their shoes and socks and to show the volunteers/staff if they have anything in their pockets. All babies and toddlers have their napkins changed by the volunteers before entering the visit area. The searching and questioning are done in the presence of the MPP assigned officer with a great deal of fun and in a non-threatening cheerful environment. The children are very happy to comply and often proceeded to remove their shoes and socks and show the contents of their pockets before they were asked to do so.

Following the visits, a group process occurs where prisoners speak of the visit and any joys and/or concerns that may have arisen. Staff and inmates provide feedback and if necessary will continue counselling and support on an individual basis. The group process is powerful in the manner in which it fosters trust and support between inmates.

Bethesda, Maryland.
Family and Corrections Network Conference
Contact: Mr Jim Mussen

This conference focused on the cultural diversity in prisons that affect prisoners and their families. The conference workshops presented programs that addressed the issues whilst acknowledging cultural differences. Meeting with professionals working in the area of prisoners and their families provided invaluable information and contacts.

Bedford Hills Correctional Facility
Superintendent: Ms Elaine Lord
Bedford Hills, New York State

The focal point of Bedford Hills Womens Prison is The Childrens Centre. The Superintendent, Ms Elaine Lord has demonstrated a commitment to incarcerated Mothers and their children. This is evident in the support given to the women prisoners and the programs provided in the prison.

The Director of The Childrens’ Centre located in the prison is Sister Elaine Roulet. Funding for the program comes mainly from Builders For Families and Youth of Catholic Charities, Diocese of Brooklyn, New York. The programs within The Childrens’ Centre are aimed at supporting those prisoners whose babies are born while incarcerated. There is a prison nursery where children remain with their Mother until the reach their first birthday.

The prison describes a typical profile of a nursery Mother as a single woman in her late twenties who had other children prior to her latest pregnancy. She was committed to the Department of Corrections from New York City for a drug offence and received a
minimum sentence of less than two years. She has had previous contact with the 
criminal justice system and had served either a prior jail or prison sentence.

In 1990 an Infant Day Care Centre opened. Its purpose is to care for the babies of 
nursery mothers who are programmed into school or work assignments. The Centre is 
staffed by inmate caregivers who are trained with the current inmate Co-ordinator 
holding a Masters Degree in Early Childhood Development.

Nursery Data:
- During 1992 there were 105 participants in the Bedford and Taconic Nursery 
  Programs. (Taconic Prison is located near Bedford Hills Prison and the prisons 
  work co-operatively on the nursery program).
- 68% of these women were incarcerated for drug offences
- 69% had a history of prior adult convictions.
- 62% were detained from New York City
- The mean sentence was 23 months
- The ages of the women ranged from 17 to 38, with 28 being the average
- 76% of the participants were single
- 73% of the women had other children
- The ethnic affiliations of most women is Black or Hispanic
- Women discharged from the program in 1991 spent an average of 7.3 months in 
  the nursery program

Programs within The Childrens Centre:

- **Children’s Advocate Office:** Two trained inmates staff this program along with 
  eight civilian volunteer advocates who meet individually with inmate mothers 
  who have problems with child visitation, transportation, school and health 
  situations. The program is available to all mothers in the prison.

- **Children’s Library:** Books are seen as playing an important role in The 
  Children’s Centre. Inmate mothers are encouraged to read books and the children 
  visiting the prison can take books home.

- **Overnight Program:** Families in the community volunteer to host children one 
  Saturday night a month during the school year. Children come to the prison by 
  bus to visit their mothers until 3.30pm. They then go to the home of a host family 
  and are returned the next morning to visit again. A special bus returns them to 
  New York City on Sunday afternoon. Bedford Prison is the only prison I 
  encountered that permits children to visit without another adult accompanying 
  them.

- **Summer Program:** Local host families board a child for one week during the 
  summer program. Each day the child is brought to visit his or her mother from 
  9.00 am to 3.00 p.m. Mother and child have special lunches together and take 
  part in day camp activities. The host families are thoroughly screened and trained 
  by program staff.
United Kingdom
Federation of Prisoners' Families Support Groups (FSPGF)
Cambridge House
London
Director: Ms Lucy Gampell

FPFSG is an umbrella organisation for agencies working with Prisoners’ Families. This organisation encourages the development of organisations and individuals that provide assistance to prisoners’ families. Training and support was offered when resources were available. The Federation also convenes conferences on a regular basis to ensure the wider community addresses issues relating to imprisonment.

HM Prison Service Headquarters
Cleland House
Page Street
London

Contact:
Ms Pamela Wilson
Order and Control Unit

Through Ms Wilson I was able to meet with people in policy and program departments within Prison Headquarters. These included Juvenile Justice, Sex Offender Division, and Programs. Much information was exchanged and contact with the people I met will be maintained.

Prison Reform Trust:
15 Northburgh Street
London

VACRO is a member of the Prison Reform Trust. My visits to the Trust enabled me to conduct searches through their resources. They have an extensive resource library that I accessed and was able to obtain copies of articles and research papers pertinent to VACRO’s work. The meeting of people in the Trust will again enable me to make future contact on a personal level.
Other Programs / Agencies visited or contacted:

Wackenhut Corrections Corporation, Kyle Prison, Texas, USA
CHIPS Children Of Incarcerated Parents, Syracuse, USA
The Correctional Association of New York, 135 East 15th Street, New York
The Osborne Association, 135 East 15th Street, New York
Child Welfare League of America, 440 1st Street, Washington
American Friends Service Committee, 15 Rutherford Place, New York.
The Howard League, 708 Holloway Road, London
The Wolds Prison, Lincoln, England
Scottish Prison Service Headquarters, Calton House, 5 Redheughs Rigg, Edinburgh
John Howard League, 17 Warriston Crescent, Edinburgh
CONCLUSION:

The Churchill Fellowship has strengthened my conviction that families of prisoners are the critical link in the prevention of crime and the breaking of inter-generational offending behaviour. The Fellowship also demonstrated that there are real possibilities in relation to prison based initiatives that span the prison wall and community.

The programs I visited, particularly in the United States, clearly demonstrated that early intervention could make a difference. It is an accepted fact that the risk of a child becoming involved in the criminal justice system is elevated when the family has a history of imprisonment. It is also acknowledged that there is a link between the lack of family support and offending.

If we are to intervene in the pattern of offending behaviour in families, the children must be given appropriate support systems.

1. The family of the person in prison must be supported appropriately. The needs of the children are paramount to the intervention strategy.
2. The prisoner must have the opportunity to remain connected to his / her family during their time of imprisonment in a manner that is supportive but appropriate.
3. The early post release period is crucial. Support networks need to be in place for the whole family unit.

IMPRESSIONS:

- The role of the family in preventing recidivism is real
- VACRO programs are the equal of any in the world
- There are some excellent overseas programs but they often reach a minority of prisoners due to the high number of incarcerated people
- VACRO is well placed to apply elements of these programs to work within Victorian prisons
- We need to look at creative alternatives to imprisonment and after-care and look closely at the possible role of non government agencies when investigating alternatives, eg, the role of non government agencies in conducting custodial establishments for a specific group of offenders
- Overcrowding in prisons is endemic and building more prisons is not the answer. (Currently 1.8 million people are in prison in the USA with the number rising)
- Prisons don’t work, people keep returning, all too often the same people

On returning to Australia discussion has taken place with the Chief Executive of Core, The Public Corrections Enterprise, to commence a pilot program in Loddon and Dhurringile Prisons based on the Match / Patch program I visited in Texas, USA. It is envisaged that the program would be eventually statewide. The program will address the following issues:

- Family: The maintenance of the family unit can be served well by the establishment of family based programs in prison. The complexity of issues surrounding the
imprisonment of a family member can be addressed through an ongoing prison based program.

- **Parenting:** Prisoners remain parents when they are in prison. The question of how the responsibility of parenting can be maintained from a prison is a concern often expressed by prisoners and their partners.

- **Relationships:** Prisons are not conducive to the maintenance of relationships. Research supports the view that there are significant links between lack of family support, especially during the critical post release period, and recidivism.

- **Children:** The impact of parental imprisonment on children is undisputed. Whilst it is often difficult to determine just how the children are affected, it is accepted that the children are often traumatised. The trauma may well have begun with the arrest of a parent and then the subsequent imprisonment.

- **Visits:**

- **Financial position:**

The importance of working effectively with prisoners' families to prevent offending patterns occurring cannot be underestimated. Additionally, programs specifically designed to address children's needs are an essential component of a wider intervention program. Ownership of offending behaviour is not only a correctional problem, it is a problem that must be owned by the wider community, therefore the community must be involved in the process of intervention.