



**PRISON
NETWORK**

2021 Annual Report



MISSION

Our vision is for dignity, hope and purpose
for women in and beyond prison

PURPOSE

To journey with women in and beyond prison,
providing the support and courage they need to
navigate positive pathways and create change

VALUES

We start with acceptance

We engage unconditionally

We make connections that transition from
the inside to the outside

We value family and community ties

We fill the gaps

We are here while you need us

We are driven by our faith



From the Chair

This year has been disruptive and a struggle for many. Sadly, many charities have felt the sting and been unable to continue delivering their important services. Although we have experienced challenges, we count ourselves incredibly fortunate to not only be able to continue operating, but also to see PN enter an exciting period of growth. This has been made possible by the generosity of our supporters, which is truly overwhelming. A sincere thank you. It has made a tremendous difference to the women.

COVID-19 meant that we had limited face-to-face contact with women inside prison. But they have not been forgotten. We have continued to deliver pivoted programs to provide support and ensure they know we are standing with them during this difficult time. Although our in-prison presence has been reduced, we have strategically utilised the additional capacity to strengthen our internal infrastructure and increase the impact of our post release work, specifically regarding pathways to employment and housing.

None of this would be possible without our amazing staff, passionate about their work and deeply invested in serving the women. Each has an important role to play in the overall performance of PN, and they do an exceptional job ably led by our CEO, Amelia Pickering. Amelia has done an outstanding job leading the organisation forward in her first year of service to PN.

I also give my thanks to the Board, a tremendous guiding light who have safeguarded our financial stability throughout these difficult times and ensured our strategic direction is clear. They give their time generously and are passionate about the work. Each brings a depth of experience and knowledge which

underpins the purpose of PN: to journey with women in and beyond prison, providing the support and courage they need to navigate positive pathways and create change.

I would particularly like to thank retiring board members Jane Frawley and Helen Walker who have served PN and its vision for decades. Their selfless dedication has had a significant impact in the lives of many women. We are grateful for all that they have contributed, and that they will continue to serve PN in other voluntary roles.

We are also thrilled to welcome Prosper Sebafundu onto the Board, a highly competent and experienced Company Secretary, who has already added significant value to PN's governance and oversight.

Although the future is still uncertain, I have no hesitation to say that for PN, it is bright. Along with our supporters, staff, and Board, we are well positioned to greet this new year with excitement and anticipation assured that through the work of PN, there will be dignity, hope and purpose for women in and beyond prison.

Bill Austin
Chair, Prison Network



CEO Message

As I come to end of my first year at Prison Network, I reflect on an extraordinary year, in extraordinary times. Despite the obvious challenges of leading a team 'virtually' and service delivery within prisons limited, together we have achieved incredible outcomes. This is in large part due to the unwavering support of our donors, partners and volunteers, the commitment of our Board and the passion of our staff.

We are grateful to Corrections Victoria and the management teams of DPFC and Tarrengower prisons for their continuing partnership in navigating the complexities of in-prison service delivery in a COVID-19 context. Although challenging, we have been able to stay connected to the women through various means.

This year marks 75 years of PN's service to women in and beyond prison. The Board and staff took this opportunity to take stock of PN's legacy, its purpose and its future. Through an extensive process of collaboration and consultation we have revised and reframed our core distinctives as detailed in this annual report.

In working together towards our renewed vision of dignity, hope and purpose for women in and beyond prison, we have charged ahead in our post release work, particularly in the areas of support through recovery groups, employment, and the expansion of our Transitional Housing Program.

Another highlight of the year was the inauguration of PN's Lived Experience Advisory Panel (LEAP). It has been wonderful to draw on the advice and experience of women we have worked with, to sharpen and improve our services. Thank you to this group of special volunteers.

Sadly, we have not been able to fully mobilise all of our volunteers this year however we are grateful that they have continued to contribute in different ways and look forward to working side-by-side at the coalface again soon. One of the greatest privileges of my role, is to work with the highly skilled PN staff. They have demonstrated great resilience and tenacity this past year. Special thanks to each of them for their tireless efforts as they journey with women in and beyond prison to provide the support and courage they need to navigate positive pathways and create change.

Special acknowledgment of Katharine Goschnick who we farewelled at the end of this reporting year. Katharine has worked with PN for many years and has made a significant contribution. We thank Katharine for her service and wish her all the best for the future.

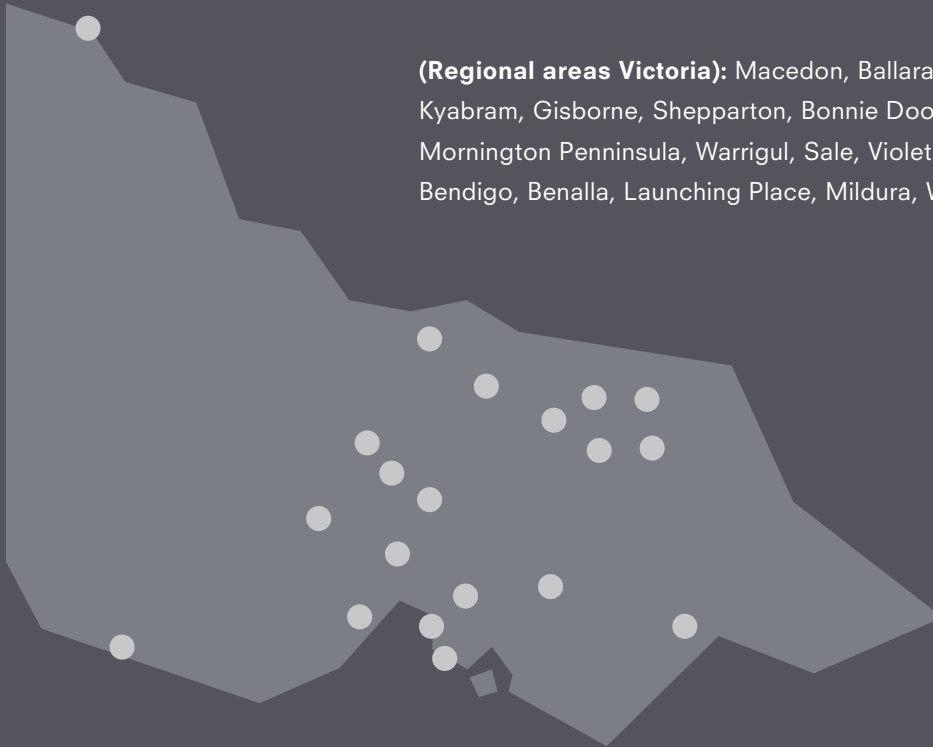
There will no doubt be challenges in the year ahead, but we will meet them with same determination that enabled us to navigate the year that has been. We are eager to build on our successes and we look to the year ahead with anticipation.

Thank you again for your ongoing and generous support of Prison Network.

Amelia Pickering
CEO, Prison Network



Geographic Reach



(Regional areas Victoria): Macedon, Ballarat, Kyneton, Wangaratta, Kyabram, Gisborne, Shepparton, Bonnie Doon, Rosebud, Geelong, Mornington Peninsula, Warrigul, Sale, Violet Town, Stewarton, Bendigo, Benalla, Launching Place, Mildura, Warnambool.

Post Release Presenting Issues



- Social Isolation
- Mental Health
- Drug and/or Alcohol
- Parenting/Custody
- Unemployment
- Financial Stress
- Exit Support
- Housing Instability
- Family Violence
- Crisis
- Physical Health

Post Release Support Provided



- Material Aid
- Crisis Support
- Informal Counselling
- Spiritual and Social Networks
- Family Support
- Budgeting
- Parenting support

Transitional Housing Program



“One of the biggest issues facing women leaving prison is suitable housing.”

One of the biggest issues facing women leaving prison is suitable housing. The provision of transitional housing can be a crucial aspect of a woman's post release success. For over ten years PN has rented a unit to support women transitioning out of prison. Alongside the unit, PN provides wrap around support assisting each woman who participates to move towards independence, employment and building a safe and supportive community. 90% of the women who have participated, have gone on to live positive lives, and not returned to prison. Our Transitional Housing Program (THP) has proven to be a solid foundation to build from.

Earlier this year supporters of PN gave an incredibly generous gift that enabled us to purchase the property that we have been renting for several years. This has made a way for PN to continue to build on the success of the THP. Over the past months we have been working with supporters, funders and landlords in order to significantly expand this important area of work in the future.

The Gift that Made It Possible: Donor Interview

How long have you been supporters of Prison Network?

It's hard to remember! Perhaps for about the last ten years or so.

How did you originally hear about the work of Prison Network and what has been your involvement?

We heard Laurel Gore speak about her work with PN. Chatting with her helped us learn more about what she did with women in prison and the support PN endeavoured to give post release. Our daughters shared with us their involvement in 'Game On' days. Some years helping with the Fun with Mum program and meeting the women and their children gave further insight.

Why was it important for you to give to housing for women coming out of prison?

For some years we've had a growing awareness of the need for safe and secure accommodation when a woman leaves prison. How do you begin to rebuild a life and try to successfully reconnect with family, if you don't have a good place to live? We appreciate being able to retreat to our home. Similarly, we wanted to help women coming out of prison to have a secure and welcoming home.

Was there anything (or anyone) that inspired your contribution?

Laurel dreams for helping women when they're released inspired us. Meeting the women and their children in the prison makes you think about how positive and lasting changes might occur. Helping them to have the

opportunity to be safe and to establish their lives with meaning and purpose, was important to us. We've been blessed by God and wanted to pass it on.

How did you feel after giving such a 'game changing' gift?

Excitement, as we saw the range of circumstances coming together to purchase the unit.

Delight, on seeing the photo of Amelia holding the key to the unit.

Joy, as we experienced the pleasure and privilege of sharing in this journey.

What advice would you give to others who are considering providing housing for women coming out of prison?

Talking to Amelia (CEO) helps to get first-hand knowledge of needs and opportunities. We were interested in making a gift that built PN's sustainability into the future. The personal interaction with Amelia and Bill (Chair) as we talked through ideas made the process a lot more meaningful. The tax-deductibility of the gift was significant – it allowed us to give much more than would otherwise have been the case.

Is there anything else you would like to share?

We realise a good, safe home is significant when a woman leaves prison. However, we know that there is a lot more to successfully re-establishing lives. We have been impressed with the work of PN ... their values and the way they build relationships, genuinely caring for women and their families as they walk alongside them.



Empowerment through Employment

Securing employment in amongst the challenges of COVID in Victoria can be difficult. Having a criminal history, can make it near impossible.

There is plenty of evidence highlighting the link between employment and successful reintegration and rehabilitation. At Prison Network we have seen first-hand how securing meaningful employment can enable a woman to build a life of dignity, hope and purpose for herself and her family. If only someone would give her a chance.

Over the past year, Prison Network has been working to build a network of corporate partners, who work with us, and our women, to provide employment opportunities and pathways in retail, cleaning, administration, and traffic management, to name a few.

PN works closely with employers to develop strategies and processes to ensure the women are provided safe and appropriate places of work and connects regularly to review progress. PN also works closely with the women in providing coaching and support throughout the recruitment process, and on-going as needed.

We regularly receive reports of the outstanding work our women are doing from our employment partners and witness the significant impact it is having in their lives.

“There is plenty of evidence highlighting the link between employment and successful reintegration and rehabilitation.”

Working Together, for Women to 'Katch a Break'

Women leaving prison have been able to access meaningful employment in large part because of the open hearts and open minds of people and organisations willing to partner with PN through our employment pathway programs.

For the past year we have been building relationships with like-minded corporate partners working together to develop suitable pathways for women from prison to employment.

This has included participation in the exciting pilot program 'Katch a Break', in partnership with the Katalyst Foundation. Several PN women have found exciting and meaningful work through this partnership.

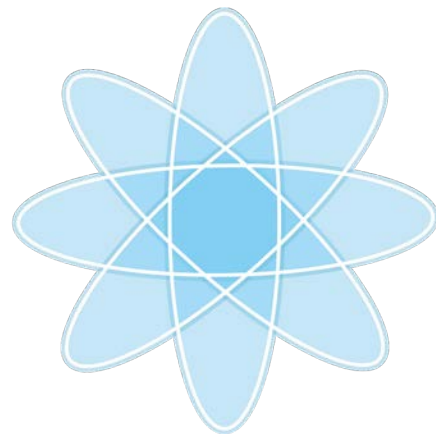
"The Katalyst Foundation is passionate about supporting individuals who are seeking a better life and who require assistance in the rebuilding process by providing paid employment. We are thrilled to provide this support to the Prison Network through our collaborative Katch a Break program. The pilot program involved placing candidates that were highly recommended in suitable employment within our organisation. The result has been a tremendous success, something we can both be extremely proud of." – **Liz Zamanis-Robinson, General Manager Katalyst Foundation.**

Another such partner has been Stacey Barrass and Goddess Cleaning Group. Stacey, Managing Director at Goddess, met with Kelly* via ZOOM whilst she was still in prison and worked together with her and Laurel, our senior support worker, to get her prepared for her new role at Goddess upon release. Kelly is now loving her new job and grateful for the opportunities it is providing her. She is considered a valuable member of Stacey's team.

*Name changed

Quote from Kelly:

"I feel like... I can't explain it. I feel like I'm trusted, and I just feel like a brand-new person. The confidence I'm getting from this is amazing! I didn't know working could be this good. I feel independent for the first time. I feel confident and I don't question my ability and I feel great afterwards. I feel needed and I feel worthy as a person. For people to believe in me is massive, it really is. I'm getting paid, I'm legit... it's amazing. Having this job to get out to, has just eliminated all the stress of having to explain myself and stress over having a police check. It's amazing and I'm so grateful."



**KATALYST
FOUNDATION**

PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY KOOKAI

I Finally Found the Courage

Vanessa's Story

I grew up in a very stable, predictable, happy, loving home. Both my parents were present, no substance abuse issues, just average working-class family. I was a very happy child, who had a great childhood.

Early in my teens a traumatic event happened. I was raped by my best friend's 'much older' boyfriend's friend. My life from that point on changed dramatically. I went from being an extroverted, funny, happy, confident girl to the exact opposite; withdrawn and depressed. I didn't go out much, I started experiencing bad anxiety, I was introduced to marijuana. I knew what it was, I tried it, I liked it. I felt it helped my anxiety and very quickly I was smoking it daily.

I quit school and started hanging around Frankston train station. I very quickly fell in with the wrong crowd. One day I tried heroin. I knew it was 'bad' but there wasn't much drug education back then. So, wow! I felt this feeling of almost warmth running through my body. It just instantly took everything away, my sadness, low self-esteem. It gave me almost an arrogance, just so much confidence. Instantly I was using daily. It just took all the bad away.

I started stealing from my family, pawning anything and everything of value just to get my hit. I was soon kicked out of home and homeless at 17. I stayed on friends couches when I could, but I spent a lot of time in parks and stairwells of shopping centres. I was petrified, but all I cared about was where I was going to get money for my next hit. Though I was using drugs I was still very much an innocent child. I met an older guy who tricked me into giving this up. One morning while he was sleeping, I grabbed my backpack and left.

I rang my mum, who I hadn't spoken to for months and begged her to let me come home. She asked me where

and what I had been doing to survive. I told her I had been prostituting myself. I had never seen my mother cry so much. They let me back in on one condition, well two. 1 - get help! 2 - you steal you're out!

I got a D&A worker, and all was going well for a few months. Then I met a guy. He was a user but I thought 'I'll be fine!' Well, I started using again and moved in with him. It wasn't long before the emotional abuse started and quickly escalated to physical violence. My parents didn't like him, so I was isolated from my family. At 21 I had my first child and then soon a second. The violence stopped until my youngest was 8 months old and then it began again, worse than before, so we left.

We stayed with my parents. During the day I would drop my kids at kinder and go commit crimes to feed my habit. I went to pick my girls up from kinder one day and the lady on the desk handed me a card and said, 'Child Protection have your children, they are at the police station'. I knew then and there if I went to the police station I would be arrested. I rang my mum and begged her to please look after the girls. 'I am going to jail; I have been stealing to pay for my drugs'.

At 24, this was my first time at DPFC. I was petrified. I didn't know what to expect. I was just so heartbroken, missing my babies. Over 10 years I was on a cycle of going in and out of prison. I grieved my daughters. I felt trapped in my dependence on drugs which meant crime and homelessness and lead me to another relationship with an addict. Three years in it got very violent very quickly. After a big beating he would be crying and saying 'sorry, I'll never do it again'. I think I chose to believe it. I was so lonely without my kids. I would rather have put up with that than being alone. My confidence and self-esteem were just non-existent.


When we found out I was pregnant we tried to clean ourselves up and live a good life. The violence stopped, but we were still using, and I was committing crime. I feel so embarrassed and disgusted now to say that. Sunny was born. DHS took him away as I soon as I was released from hospital. I ended up being arrested and sentenced to 18 months jail.

This time I thought 'I want change, this has to stop'. I couldn't put another child through the consequences of my actions. I put myself in the drug unit. We did three drug screens a week. People might think 'but you are in jail', trust me there are drugs in there. Through group and individual therapy, I started being honest and real, and dealing with things.

I started doing fitness classes every Tuesday and Thursday, run by Laurel Gore from Prison Network. It was great for my fitness and mental health. One day Laurel sat down beside me and asked when I was getting released and if I had a plan or support when I got out. Laurel offered to support me. I met up with 'Loz' a few times when I got out. I wasn't using, well as much. I was committing crimes and was still with my son's father and the domestic violence was just getting worse.

I finally found the courage to leave him. I didn't want my son to see those behaviours and think it's acceptable. I have now been clean for three years. I have my children in my life. My 7-year-old son lives with me, and my daughters (18 and 16) stay every weekend or when they want. I have my family back and most importantly I am reliable, and I am consistent.

I am now part of Prison Network's Recovery Support Group. It is amazing. I absolutely look forward to Mondays and the support. It's like a family. It is so important for me to have Prison Network and all they do to help and support women to achieve their goals. I just can't explain how important it is for my recovery and my mental health. It's my place to talk and feel safe to do so. Seriously, thank you Prison Network, Laurel and the ladies, I don't think you even realise how special you are to so many women and people. Thank You!



**This time I
thought 'I want
change, this
has to stop'.**

Women We Work With

The ways that women become engaged in the criminal justice system and are imprisoned are different to men.

Women are more likely to have experienced trauma prior to entering prison. Between 70 to 90 per cent of women in prison have been victims of violence and abuse.

Women in prison have higher rates of mental ill-health, substance abuse and homelessness compared to men.

Women are less likely than men to have committed violent offences.

Women are more likely than men to be criminalised due to issues associated with drug dependence, including drug offending, theft and property offences.

The majority of women in Australian prisons have children, with 85 per cent having been pregnant at some point in their lives, and 54 per cent having at least one dependent child.

62 Women supported each week

2,067 Craft packs sent into prison

450 Christmas packages sent to each woman in prison

9 Kids went to Adventure Camps during school holidays

352 In-prison referral calls made

16,240 Activity sheets sent into prison

51 Mums supported to have zoom calls with their kids

48 Women supported Post Release

Lived Experience Advisory Panel

The inaugural LEAP (Lived Experience Advisory Panel) Group was instituted at PN earlier this year and is made up of women who have been in prison and been engaged with PN. We are thrilled to have a small group of women who meet with us regularly as part of this panel. We are incredibly grateful for their time and commitment, and deeply value their advice and perspective and the impacts these have on our practise.

One of our LEAP members, Pattie, has provided the following annual LEAP report:

I was incarcerated at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre for 4 years; this was my first time in prison.

Life in prison is very mundane and it can be difficult to make time meaningful which is one of the reasons Prison Network is very important. The programs provided allows an incarcerated women to adjust to the prison environment, be challenged and overcome boredom. They also improve the atmosphere in the prison by reducing tensions, opening communication, and fostering a healthy lifestyle. The skills gained, can be transferred to the community, once released.

I heard about Prison Network from other in-mates and noticed their strong presence during game on days, craft, group fitness, discussion group and other programs, but it wasn't until a chance encounter with Laurel from Prison Network that I really understood how great an organisation they are. There in front of me stood a woman who was curious, not here to judge but to show me/us what being selfless looks like. Our conversations had a profound impact on me; I wanted to be a positive role model.

Early on, I also knew I wanted to be a voice for change and help the same women Prison Network is helping. It was clear the impact they were having on women pre- and post-release, and I wanted to be part of it but was unsure of how I could contribute, so I was thrilled when I was invited to join LEAP.

I think I can speak for all of us when I say that Amelia has encouraged us to use our voices, be authentic and to not to hold back.

Our small group of ex-inmates have been able to accomplish so much in such a short time. We provided advice to Prison Network when they were revising their Vision, Mission (or purpose statement) and core values. We were able to give our perspective on these core distinctives to ensure that they not only accurately represented the work that Prison Network does, but that these statements were appropriate and meaningful for anyone who may engage with Prison Network as a 'user'.

I want to thank Prison Network for giving our voices back and allowing us to be part of the conversation!

Pattie.

“Early on, I also knew I wanted to be a voice for change and help the same women Prison Network is helping.”

Our Enduring Volunteers

Being a volunteer of PN has been vastly different this year with prisons closed to visitors and our in-prison programs paused for much of the year. Despite this our passionate and committed volunteer force have been waiting in the wings, engaged and ready to step up when needed. We were able to have a wonderful time together at our annual (and this year virtual) volunteer training day in August. Here we heard from one of the women we support, spent time digging deeper into our understanding of trauma and its affects, and met in small groups to touch base and encourage one another.

We also used the 'down time' to evaluate and strengthen our recruitment processes and have continued to recruit new volunteers.

We are ready for what the next year holds and look forward to mobilising our volunteers in the year ahead.

Here Jane Frisken, one of our newer volunteers, shares a little bit about her story of volunteering at PN.

Volunteer Profile: Jane Frisken



I am a wife, mother of three adult children, and carer for 90-year-old parents (trying dearly to keep them in their home). I love bushwalking, beekeeping, and craft.

What is your day job?

I have worked as an Occupational Therapist for over 35 years, specialising in hand therapy. I currently work at the Royal Children's Hospital with a wonderful team of surgeons, nurses and other therapists, all helping children who have sustained trauma, burns, or have been born with various syndromes or malformations affecting their arm and hand.

How you came to be involved?

In 2019 I became aware of a community meal running in my area and dropped in one evening to see if I could do anything to help. How amazing to meet Ben Frawley, who later introduced me to his wife Jane. After a few wonderful meals spent chatting with the participants, Jane sidled up to me and asked whether I'd heard of Prison Network. She had been watching me talking to the people during meals and thought that my gifts might be great in the PN setting. I went home to look PN up and soon was well-immersed in the application process. During 2020 I'd made it through the screening process and was ready to serve - but COVID had a different time frame of course. I finally made it into DPFC with the Thursday craft group a few times in May this year before lockdown ceased contact yet again.

What were your first impressions and how did reality differ from expectations?

I knew there would be a security procedure to follow for entry into DPFC, but it was way more thorough than what I pictured! More involved than entering an airport. It was great to see some of the prison staff engaging in a really positive way with the craft team, and I was amazed at how many women queued up at the craft room door with a distinct buzz of anticipation. After the first craft session got underway one of the things that really struck me was how difficult it was for many of the participants to make seemingly simple decisions

around things such as colour and design choice. This really made me think about how few choices a woman can make for herself in prison. And given where life has taken them, many are possibly struggling to feel confident in the choices they make.

What volunteering means to you?

Volunteering to me is all about service, and loving others as we would like to be loved. Through my faith I feel I have been given many special friends who have lifted me up in difficult times and I have been resourced me to do the same for others.

Photos © 2018 Mercy Ships - Catrice Wulf



Pro Bono acknowledgements

Maddocks

Thank you to Maddocks who have provided pro bono legal advice and support over the past year. The amazing team at Maddocks have worked with us to ensure that we are meeting our legal and compliance obligations under our award through a thorough review and updating of our employment contracts and several important policies. We are incredibly grateful for their outstanding support.



Maddocks

Blaze Your Trail

Blaze Your Trail was established this year to help charities and small businesses get the most out of technology. Alongside revolutionising charities Blaze Your Trail provides practical hands-on learning opportunities, mentoring and support to find pathways to employment for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, who are also often parents trying to return to work, and people looking to change their career to technology roles. The support Prison Network has received has been a game changer as we moved our CRMs to Salesforce to streamline our operations, and Raisely for our donation platform. We have been able to acquire these new systems, as well as the support from Blaze Your Trail, at no (or very little) cost. It has opened a new world for Prison Network as we now have much greater management and reporting capabilities, relationship-building functions, and prospecting tools. We are incredibly grateful to Jessica, Deepa, and the team for their hard work, and belief in the importance of what we do.



Events

We were very fortunate to participate in a large event this year. Hosted by the Lions Club of Nunawading we celebrated International Women's Day. Over \$5,000 was raised for the work of Prison Network with a generous contribution from Community Bank Blackburn South. It was also a huge evening for one of the women we work with who sang publicly for the first time in 12 years. It was such a privilege to enjoy a beautiful and heartfelt performance.



Sponsors and Partners

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Our Kitchen Table
CREATE. CONNECT. COMMUNITY.



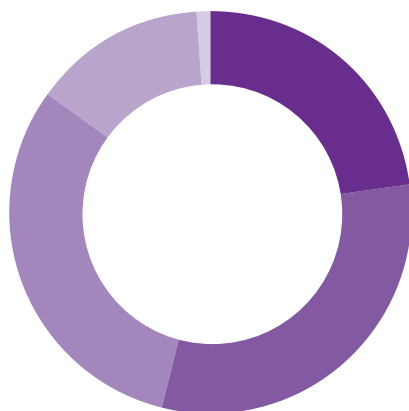
Finances

The financial statements for 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 for Prison Network Ministries are audited by Saward Dawson. A full set of the audited financial statements are available on the ACNC website.

FY2021		
REVENUE SOURCES	\$	%
Donations & Gifts	165,244	23%
Government Grants & Payments	217,782	31%
Major Donors	216,587	31%
Philanthropic, Trusts & Foundations	98,615	14%
Other Income	9,827	1%
TOTAL Income	708,055	100%

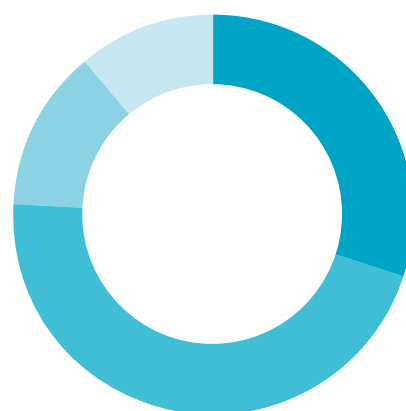
EXPENSES	\$	%
In-prison Program Costs	157,823	30%
Post-release Program Costs	243,981	46%
Accountability & Administration	67,242	13%
Fundraising	55,862	11%
TOTAL Expense	524,908	100%
Net Surplus	183,147	

Revenue Sources



- Donations & Gifts 23%
- Government Grants & Payments 31%
- Major Donors 31%
- Philanthropic, Trusts & Foundations 14%
- Other Income 1%

Expenses



- In-prison Program Costs 30%
- Post-Release Program Costs 46%
- Accountability & Administration 13%
- Fundraising 11%

Get Involved

Become a Volunteer

If you would like to know more about volunteering with Prison Network:
www.prisonnetwork.org.au/get-involved

Support Financially

Please consider supporting Prison Network financially. Regular giving will enable us to expand our work. Donations welcome: www.prisonnetwork.org.au
All donations over \$2 are tax deductible





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