



PRISON
NETWORK

supporting
inspiring
restoring

Annual Report 2018/2019

Prison Network Ministries

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Prison Network Ministries is a Company Limited by Guarantee and a Registered Charity that provides holistic support to women and their families who are, or who have been in Victoria's prisons, supporting and inspiring them to make the decisions necessary to build lasting change.



2018-2019 PRISON NETWORK ANNUAL REPORT

Seventy-two years ago, in 1946 Myrtle Breen started visiting the women in Pentridge Prison.

Since then, that work has continued through Prison Network, who supports women in Victoria's prisons, seeking to inspire change and assist them and their families restore their lives. Myrtle peacefully passed away on 27 August 2019 at the age of 95. Her legacy lives on and we, together with the women in Victoria's prisons, continue to be inspired and encouraged by her vision and generosity of heart.

In the last year there have been a number of changes at Prison Network. In August 2018, we welcomed Bill Austin, an experienced Board Director, as the new Board Chair. After 8 years of dedicated service to the organisation, Matthew Stokes stepped down as a

Director and Treasurer. We are very grateful for his contribution to Prison Network over this period. In February 2019, Jayde Taylor was appointed as a Director and Treasurer, bringing an international background in finance and corporate strategy.

Many volunteers work alongside staff to make a major contribution to Prison Network. We thank Lyn Stephens who stepped down from her part-time staff role and continues to run the Craft and Cooking program. We also thank Sarah Charles, Sonia Beamish, Katherine Goschnick, Jenni Walker and Helen Walker for their ongoing commitment to the work of Prison Network.

And we continue to be very grateful to all those who volunteer, pray and support Prison Network financially.

During 2019, we have focused on building financial stability and sustainability. In the year ahead, we will continue this focus. In addition, we will seek opportunities to partner with like-minded organisations in bringing the support required to build positive and lasting change to women and their families who are or have been, in the Victorian criminal justice system. In the year ahead, whilst growing the reach of our in-prison programs, we also aim to build up our post release activities, supporting women to successfully re-integrate into the community and reduce the risks of re-offending.

We trust as you read this Annual Report you will be inspired by the stories and experiences of hope from the women Prison Network has supported.

"YOU GIVE US
A LISTENING EAR,
SOMEONE TO LAUGH
AND CRY WITH AND
ACCEPT US WITHOUT
JUDGEMENT."



Bill Austin
Chair



Jane Frawley
CEO

THE TEAM AT PRISON NETWORK



BOARD DIRECTORS AS AT 30 JUNE 2019

From left to right: Natalie Fielding, David Breen, Lavinia Podolak, Helen Walker, Bill Austin, Jayde Taylor and Paul Joy (Thea Norris and Jane Frawley absent)



STAFF

From left to right: Jane Frawley, Kerryn Pell, Laurel Gore, Andrea Steele

"YOU GIVE US
ONE THING WE
LOST QUICKLY –
OUR DIGNITY"

Prison Network relies on the work of many volunteers who give their time to support the women, families and staff in a variety of ways. We sincerely thank them for their dedicated commitment to this vital work.

DID YOU KNOW

It is estimated that 87% of incarcerated women are victims of sexual, physical or emotional abuse in either childhood (63%) or adulthood (78%), with the majority victims of multiple forms of abuse. The prison system can often exacerbate trauma for female criminal offenders with such histories. As a result, the majority of female prisoners suffer from complex trauma.

Fourth Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010 - 2022, Cwifh of Aust 2019

OUR STAFF



As I approach 30 years of involvement with Prison Network, including 23 years on staff, I have reflected on the changes I have seen during this period. The most obvious change is

the growth in the number of incarcerated women; from under 100 women to in excess of 550. Sadly, family violence and homelessness have also increased alarmingly, along with addiction to a range of drugs.

However, it is encouraging that during this period the womens' prisons have become more focused on rehabilitation, offering beneficial programs and support services both in the prisons and post release. Thirty years ago, one social worker supported all the women at Fairlea Women's Prison with little other support staff. These improvements are a credit to Corrections Victoria.

The constant throughout however, is the need for the women to tell their story to someone who will listen - the circumstances of their crime, their life leading up to the crime and the sudden and traumatic entry into court and the prison system. But most importantly, their great need is to share their current prison experience, its highs and lows, achievements and frustrations, experiences of insight and growth, and fears and disappointments. Without someone to listen to their unique and complex stories, prison is a very dark and difficult place.

In the past year, my role has increasingly become a readily accessible listening ear, providing support and information about relevant services. With the help of volunteers, I have continued facilitating Fitness class, Game On Day, Discussion Group and Sunday Live. The highlight of this work is the frequent comments from the women regarding how important they see our programs to be. Women often say PN is "different to the others." When we ask what they mean, their response is "I don't know, you just are. You show us girls you really care, and a lot of us just aren't used to that".

I sincerely hope and pray PN will continue to care that way for the women for many years to come.

Laure Gore
Senior Support Worker



It continues to be a privilege to be part of the Prison Network team and have the opportunity to journey alongside some of Victoria's most resilient

and also most marginalised women. The names and faces of the women in prison regularly change (47% of women are in custody for less than a month at a time), but the stories they share are often similar - stories of sexual, physical and emotional abuse, reports of homelessness, mental illness and substance dependency. Often the pain is palpable and the need quite overwhelming – evidenced in part by the large volume of referrals that we receive each week – women desperately seeking help to address the myriad of issues they are dealing with.

One of the great aspects of the Support Worker role is the flexibility to visit the women throughout the prison compound and respond to needs as they arise. Often I feel like I am in the "right place at the right time" - whether it is sitting with a woman just after they've received difficult news, arranging transport for a child to visit their mother, providing a lift to a woman who has just been released, or remembering someone's name and following up on a previous conversation. The women are always keen for a chat and an opportunity to speak to someone who isn't in prison "blues".

There have been many highlights and sources of encouragement in 2019, such as seeing women thriving in rehabilitation facilities and spending time with women in the community who, in spite of significant challenges, are making positive steps in their transition journey – reconnecting with family, gaining employment, building positive social connections and contributing to society. It has been exciting to see new volunteers passionately embrace the work and I've really valued working alongside some more experienced PN volunteers in offering support to women outside prison.

Kerry Pell
Senior Support Worker



PN would not exist but for its incredible volunteer base of over 65 individuals who are geographically spread across Victoria.

PN volunteers are committed, giving their time on a regular basis to ensure PN can run its programs and build important connections with the women at both Dame Phyllis Frost Centre and Tarrengower Prisons. Working with vulnerable and marginalised women and children requires particular skills and I am responsible for ensuring that all our volunteers are carefully vetted and suited to this unique work.

As the Volunteer Manager, I consider it a privilege to work with the PN volunteers; assisting them through the screening process, accompanying them on their initial work in the programs, training them and providing ongoing support and guidance.

The volunteers themselves are inspiring and I enjoy meeting with new volunteers and hearing about their motivations for wanting to be involved in PN. It is very fulfilling to see the volunteers grow and develop in their work with PN, particularly as they journey alongside the women, encouraging and serving them as they transition into the community.

I began as a volunteer myself, involved with the Game On Day program, so I understand what it's like to be a volunteer and the challenges that can go hand in hand with working in the prison with the women. It enables me to advocate for the volunteers and hopefully understand their needs a bit better than I otherwise would.

I look forward to continuing in this role as we grow as an organisation and continue to build up our volunteer base.

Andrea Steele
Volunteer Manager

"I TRULY BELIEVE ANYONE CAN TURN THEIR LIVES AROUND, BUT YOU JUST NEED THAT ONE PERSON TO BELIEVE IN YOU AND STAND BY YOU NO MATTER WHAT... THANK YOU PRISON NETWORK."

OUR PROGRAMS

Prison Network connects with at least 120 women per week through its in-prison programs, referrals and informal contacts, increasing to over 200 in the weeks when Game On Day and Sunday Live are held. Prison Network staff are a regular presence in the various prison precincts, providing immediate support to women who require assistance.



INSIDE PRISON

Statistics for 2018/2019



Craft & Cooking: provides a weekly recreational activity for women at DPFC* and fortnightly at Tarrengower. The program provides women with the opportunity to participate in a variety of activities, building confidence, developing skills and making gifts they may share with their children. The program can assist in distracting women from the often chaotic and unsettling experience of the prison environment and helps them connect with the Prison Network volunteers.

2,432
attended

84
sessions



Fun With Mum: is held at DPFC, creating opportunities for positive family connectedness, ensuring the majority of child-only visits have age-appropriate activities for the children and their mothers. It fosters building healthy connections, positive memories, and increases the motivation for change.

272
mums and
387
children
attended

22
sessions



Game On Day: is held at DPFC every 5-6 weeks on a Saturday morning. This popular program provides women with the opportunity to play competitive team sports such as netball, basketball, volley ball, soccer and cricket against up to 10 PN volunteers and staff. It provides a healthy physical outlet and socialising with volunteers and staff.

255
attended

7
sessions



Fitness: The Fitness program is held weekly at DPFC and encourages physical activity, teaches new skills and builds confidence, strength and fitness levels in the women.

624
attended

41
sessions



Discussion Group: The Discussion Group is held weekly at DPFC and fortnightly at Tarrengower. This program provides women with the opportunity to discuss life issues and explore their motivations and responses to these issues in life.

901
attended

48
sessions



Sunday Live: is held at DPFC once a month on a Sunday in both Protection and in Mainstream, giving women the opportunity to hear motivational stories of change and hope.

824
attended

11
sessions



Talk It Out: This innovative program, run in DPFC mainstream, protection and remand over 6 weeks for groups of up to 10 women, assists women examine their responses to stress, reduce anxiety and teaches positive communication skills. (Program ceased 30 June 2019.)

32
attended

3x6
week sessions

*DPFC – Dame Phyllis Frost Centre

OUTSIDE PRISON

Transport

During 2018/19 Prison Network transported children of ex-offenders to school holiday camps. PN also transports some children to visits with their mothers, who otherwise would not be able to attend.

Transitional Accommodation and Support:

Prison Network made transitional accommodation available to one woman (and her child/children as appropriate), exiting prison. The accommodation is coupled with intensive support, assisting the women to re-connect with family, attend appointments, seek employment and/or training and re-establish their lives – encouraging positive long term outcomes. Over eight years, PN has supported seven women. Over this period, notwithstanding several women have histories of repeated offending, only one has briefly returned to prison.

Post Release Work: Individual and immediate support for women as they transition and re-integrate into the community, including transporting women from prison to court and providing other support as requested by Dame Phyllis Frost Centre.

THEIR STORIES



Kristy's Story

It had been 10 years since Kristy** had been to prison. A decision to return to live in her childhood country town triggered a downhill slide for her. Her incarceration left her two teenage children with no secure place to live, and her partner and youngest child were forced to move 300 kms away.

Kristy was overwhelmed with shame and regret. Early in her sentence her partner of 10 years ended the relationship and she became suicidal. She now had no visitors and was unable to see her youngest child. During this time Kristy engaged regularly with PN staff who were able to listen, provide information and refer her to other services. PN arranged to transport her child in on Sundays for the Fun With Mum program, which became extremely important times for Kristy and her daughter. In school holidays, PN also arranged for her daughter to attend camps, which she really enjoyed.

When Kristy was transferred to Tarrengower Prison, she attended PN programs and was able to continue to connect with PN staff and volunteers. As she was nearing her parole date, she had nowhere to go, having lost all her possessions because of her incarceration. She was extremely upset and anxious about her future. PN was able to offer her accommodation at the PN unit and as a result, she was released on her earliest release date.

Since release, she has reconnected with her children. A PN contact provided Kristy with employment and she is now earning sufficient income to rent her own property. She says that she is now "excited about the future for the first time in her life."

***Name changed.*



Donna's Story

Donna** spent her initial days in prison crying in her cell, only leaving to get meals and use the phone. Her distress was noticed by other prisoners who suggested that PN might be able to help her. Although initially hesitant, Donna warmed to our support over the next few weeks, sharing the pain of enduring 30 years of family violence, and her

particular concerns for one of her adult children who required significant care.

Despite ongoing offers of support, we initially did not hear from her after her release. We heard of the struggles and isolation Donna was experiencing outside the walls of prison through a friend of hers. Encouraged by her friend in prison, Donna made contact with PN and we built on the relationship we began while she was in custody. It was a relief for her to meet someone who knew of her "in-jail" experience, and who wouldn't judge her.

The journey for Donna has been far from easy. Deep depression led to multiple attempts to end her life. Regular inpatient admissions, family relationships to be navigated, significant decisions regarding her future had to be made – alongside the reality that a court case with an unknown outcome continued to loom. Possibly the most significant challenge for Donna was the shame, social isolation and loneliness. While connected with many professional services, Donna longed for friends. A PN volunteer has provided her with valuable support and company. Through this, some of Donna's interests and talents have been discovered, leading to her engaging with a local craft group. Her confidence has blossomed as she built friendships and developed new skills.

***Name changed.*

"PRISON NETWORK IS AWESOME, I'M STRUGGLING TO FIND THE RIGHT WORDS TO SUM UP ALL THAT THEY DO FOR US WOMEN AND CHILDREN."

DID YOU KNOW*

As at 30 June 2019, 575 women are in Victoria's prisons with 268 or 46.6% being unsentenced, or on remand, up from 37% at 30 June 2016 and 22.6% at 30 June 2014.

"THANK YOU SO MUCH... WHEN I FELT EVERYONE, EVEN MY FATHER OR MY HUSBAND ABANDONED ME, YOU ARE AMAZING WOMEN WHO BROUGHT ME HOPE AGAIN. THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR EVERYTHING YOU DID."

"I'M REALLY TRYING TO CHANGE MY BEHAVIOUR AND IT'S A SLOW AND LONELY PROCESS FOR ME, BUT YOUR MESSAGES REALLY HELP KEEP ME FOCUSED."

"THANK YOU FOR BEING MY LIGHT IN THE DARK."

DID YOU KNOW*

Of those entering remand between 2015 and 2016, 26% reported experiencing homelessness or housing instability, 65% reported being a victim of family violence and 69% had children. The impact of incarceration on children is significant.

"I DON'T KNOW HOW TO THANK YOU LADIES FOR THE ASSISTANCE YOU ARE GIVING ME THROUGH THIS HARD TIME IN MY LIFE. THERE ARE NO WORDS TO DESCRIBE HOW THANKFUL AND APPRECIATED YOUR HELP HAS BEEN. I AM HOPING WHEN I CAN GET ON MY FEET I CAN SOMEHOW PAY BACK THE GENEROSITY AND FRIENDSHIP YOU HAVE GIVEN ME IN MY TIME OF NEED, NOT SURE WHAT I WOULD HAVE DONE WITHOUT YOUR HELP. ONCE AGAIN THANK YOU VERY MUCH."

"TO FIND KINDNESS AND ACCEPTANCE IN THIS PLACE WAS NOT EXPECTED. THANK YOU PRISON NETWORK."

THE FINANCES

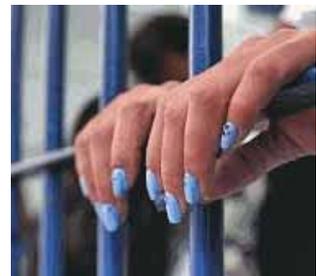
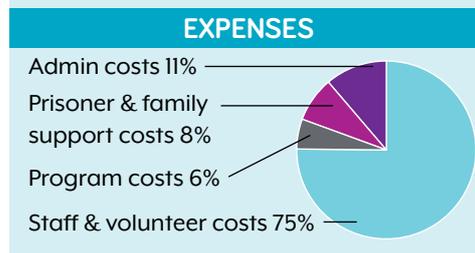
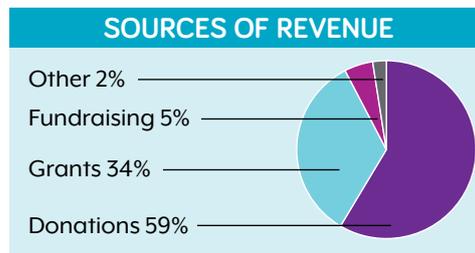
The financial statements for 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019 for Prison Network Ministries are reviewed by RDL Accountants. A full set of the reviewed financial statements is available on the Prison Network website.

	FY1819		FY1718	
REVENUE SOURCES	\$	%	\$	%
Donations	179,830	59%	165,640	55%
Grant income	103,333	34%	103,333	34%
Fundraising income	16,110	5%	25,361	8%
Other income	7,656	2%	9,879	3%
TOTAL INCOME	306,929	100%	304,213	100%
EXPENSES				
Staff and Volunteer costs	223,591	75%	243,922	76%
Program costs	16,383	6%	17,370	5%
Prisoner & family support costs	24,263	8%	21,564	7%
Admin costs	33,237	11%	39,274	12%
TOTAL EXPENSES	297,474	100%	322,130	100%
NET SURPLUS	\$9,455		-\$17,917	

EMPLOYEES (AT 30.6.19)	
Full-Time	1
Part-Time	2
Casual	2
Total Employees	5
FTE	2.20
Volunteers	68
Board Members	9

Over the past 5 years, Prison Network has been the recipient of the following grants:

- Department of Justice and Community Safety, Corrections Victoria, through the Pip Wisdom Community Corrections Grant
- Westpac Community Grant
- Maddocks Foundation
- Lord Mayor's Charitable Fund
- Bible Society Australia
- Light FM Radio Grant
- Prison Network also relies on the generous support from private donors, churches, businesses and bequests.



DID YOU KNOW

- That the net cost of keeping a prisoner per day in Victoria in 2017-18 was \$323.82, which is approximately \$118,000 per annum?*
- Between 2013-2018, female incarceration rates increased by 53% (compared to 37% among males) (ABS: 2018)

Prison Network Ministries is registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for profits Commission (ACNC) and will be disclosing its financial performance in the 2019 Annual Information Statement, which will be lodged with the ACNC and will be available via the ACNC's Charity Register.

We would greatly value your support.

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

Please consider supporting Prison Network financially. Regular giving will help us reach more women. Donations welcome:
www.prisonnetwork.org.au/donate
 All donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

OUR HISTORY

In 1946, Prison Network founder, Myrtle Breen, approached Pentridge Prison requesting permission to visit the female prisoners. Myrtle, and later Marj Swales and others, built a strong foundation of providing ongoing support and care for women in prison.

Prison Network with the dedicated work of staff and volunteers, has continued the legacy of care through its commitment to supporting and empowering women and their families, who are

or have been associated with the criminal justice system in Victoria – irrespective of age, nationality, culture, beliefs and the reason they have been incarcerated.

Prison Network staff are a regular presence in the various prison precincts, through its in-prison programs, referrals and informal contacts, providing support and responding to practical, emotional and spiritual needs of some of Victoria's most marginalised women and their families.



Myrtle Breen