



**PRISON
NETWORK**

supporting
inspiring
restoring

Annual Report 2019/2020

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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.

2019-2020 PRISON NETWORK ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE CHAIR AND CEO

The 2019-2020 reporting year for Prison Network has been an exciting time of growth and greater financial stability. We trust you will find the stories in this Annual Report inspiring and testimony that lives can be restored, despite challenging circumstances. Prison Network has continued to empower women, inspire change and help women restore their lives and families.

We would like to thank the Board for their oversight of Prison Network throughout the year. In particular we acknowledge our retiring Board members, Thea Norris and Natalie Fielding, who have both given loyal and devoted service during their Board terms. We welcomed Carolyn Clark OAM to the Board in June 2020 and are excited about the range of skills she brings.

We are pleased that, as our financial position has stabilised, we have been able to employ a CEO part-time for the new financial year. Jane Frawley has stepped down from the role after two years of voluntary service. We are immensely grateful to Jane for the time and commitment she has devoted to this role as we worked to achieve a more stable financial footing. Jane continues to support Prison Network as a Director on a voluntary basis and also provides advice to the incoming CEO.

Following a rigorous recruitment process and some outstanding applications, we were pleased to appoint Amelia Pickering as our CEO from July 2020. Amelia comes with a wealth of experience in the Not-for-Profit Sector, joining us from Menzies School of Health Research (MSHR), one of Australia's leading health education and research training institutes

dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of indigenous Australians. Amelia has pioneered programs in South African squatter camps and was the Vice-President of Harvest Bible College. She has a Masters in Theology, qualifications in Research and Social Impact, and extensive experience in developing and delivering programs. We are confident that in the years ahead she will be key to developing new growth strategies for Prison Network's mission of supporting, inspiring change and journeying with women who have experienced incarceration in Victoria's prisons.

In December, we farewelled Kerryn Pell, a Senior Support Worker who is now CEO of Whitehorse Churches Care. Kerryn will be sorely missed, however, we are delighted that Sarah Charles, a volunteer Fun With Mum Coordinator, is now a salaried support worker, filling the vacancy left by Kerryn.

In February, we also welcomed Sally Tonkin to a senior fundraising role. Sally brings a wealth of experience, including as the CEO of St Kilda Gatehouse. Katharine Goschnik re-joined the staff as a part-time Pastoral Care Coordinator.

As always, we are indebted to our staff and senior volunteers: Laurel Gore, Andrea Steele, Sarah, Sally, Katharine, Sonia Beamish, Lyn Stephens, Jenni Walker and Helen Walker for their ongoing commitment to the work of Prison Network. They go above and beyond, inspired by their passion for this work. We are very grateful for our volunteers and supporters who faithfully contribute to the work of Prison Network. We would not be able to continue this important work without them.

The last quarter of the year has seen Prison Network's normal activities significantly impacted by COVID-19 restrictions. In spite of this, we have found creative ways to maintain connections with women in prison and have built more extensive virtual links with post-release women in Melbourne, Regional Victoria and interstate through online discussion and support groups.

Although COVID-19 prevented us from going into prisons, we have continued working with Corrections Victoria to maintain our connections with those inside prison. While our work has been restricted, it did not stop.

We greet the year ahead with excitement, anticipating further development in our programs inside the prisons and increasing the reach of our activities outside the prisons. We look forward to growing our capacity to reach women, supporting positive and lasting changes as they leave prison and journey into life in the community.

Thank you for your interest in and support of Prison Network's work.



Bill Austin
Board Chair



Jane Frawley
CEO



BOARD DIRECTORS 2019/2020

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



FROM THE FRONTLINE

'If it were not for the undying devotion of these wonderful women from Prison Network, I honestly believe that I would not have survived my 10 years. I cannot find enough words to express the gratitude that I and my family feel towards them. They show sheer strength and courage under the most difficult of circumstances and never ever give up! They put the needs of the children, mothers and families before their own and without their services many of these families would never survive the time.'

Many people say to us that prison work must be tough. It certainly has many and varied challenges, but it's uplifting to work with a team who love what they do and are passionate about making a difference. The above quote, reflects how the women we work with are buoyed by the enthusiasm and commitment of the team.

The past year had some difficult times with women we worked closely with tragically passing. We never get used to these heartaches. More positive reflections relate to the unit which provides housing and support for women who otherwise would have nowhere else to go and often no one else to turn to. The women who have lived there in the past year, have really thrived and it's been exciting to see. Another highlight was the Christmas period, which can be such a difficult time for women in prison and hearts are often heavy. We ran three Christmas concerts at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (DPFC) back-to-back, which allowed almost every woman to be able to be part of it. With a great cover band, a sensational hip hop crew and an extremely popular acoustic duo, the women had a fantastic day. Some women sang on stage for the fun of it and some performed their own items. Their talent was outstanding. We also ran a party at Tarrengower and prepared presents for the women at both facilities and for those we connect with on the outside. Our other role was to provide activities at the children's party at both locations and provide transport for children who had no other way of getting there. It was all significant to lifting the spirits of everyone.

As we press on to another year we look to further opportunities to enthusiastically make a difference to women who are often in the most difficult days of their lives.



THE HEART OF PRISON NETWORK

Over the last year, 65 incredible volunteers, spread across Victoria, have underpinned the work of Prison Network. We would not exist without our committed volunteer base who tirelessly turn up to programs week after week, offering love and support to women in the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre and Tarrengower Prison. Working with vulnerable and marginalised women and children requires particular skills, sensitivity and commitment. We are grateful for this passionate and inspiring work force who freely give of themselves and their time in support of the work of Prison Network.

We sincerely thank them for their dedicated commitment to Prison Network.



NEIGHBOURHOOD CHALLENGE

Last year we were delighted to raise \$15,000 through Run Melbourne. Enthused by that result we began early preparations again this year. It soon became clear that such a large event couldn't happen. We saw an opportunity to tap into the many new exercise routes people were finding in their local neighbourhood. We asked our supporters to join us for a 24 Hour Neighbourhood Challenge. Participants simply needed to sign up and commit to ride, walk, run or scoot around their neighbourhood during the weekend of 24-26 July. We set an ambitious target of \$20,000. Individuals, housemates, work colleagues and families signed up to do extraordinary challenges. They included half marathons, a canoe ride on the Yarra River and a 60km bike ride. We quickly passed our target and are close to reaching \$25,000 as final donations come in. In a year where fundraising has been disrupted, we were overwhelmed by this result. It means a lot for the work we are doing and has brought new supporters and followers. A big thank you to everyone who signed up and to all who generously gave.

"People donating their time and love is so important. Prison can be isolating and Prison Network provides a true sense of community. Although they don't do it for praise and accolades, I can't express the value of what these amazing women do."

KEEPING KIDS CONNECTED



The majority
of women in prison are
mothers with dependent
children

Nearly half
of the women in
prison are on
remand

Kate* was really struggling, 'I haven't seen my children in 5 months. My sister doesn't have a car and is unable to bring them in to visit me. I miss them so much'. I acknowledged how hard that must be and informed her Prison Network is able to assist with transport with children to see their mothers in prison. 'Really? Are you sure? Oh yes please! You would do that for me? Really?' I offered to talk with her sister and arrange the logistics that week.

The next day I connected with the children's Aunty Kelly*, to arrange for the children to visit their mum the following weekend. Kelly and I ended up talking for some time. Kelly had been going through some challenges, and just needed someone to talk to.

Kelly also needed to understand the logistics and protocols involved in the kids' visit to the prison. She was a bit nervous about what the experience was going to be like for the kids. I was able to advise on what they could bring along, the clothes they could wear and how much money they would need to purchase food during the visit. I talked her through the process of going through security and what items needed to be left at home. I also explained that we run the Fun With Mum program during the 'children only' visit time on Sunday. Kelly put me on speaker so I could let the kids know about the Fun With Mum program too. I told them about the soccer balls, hula hoops, bubbles, paint, craft activities and numerous board games waiting for them. They were getting excited about the visit and what activity they planned on doing with their Mum. I also told them about the van I would pick them up in. They were able to choose the seats they wanted to sit in. By the end of the conversation Kelly was comfortable about sending the children for the visit and the children were counting down the days till they got to see their mum.

The day of the visit, we picked the children up from their home, checked that they had the right clothes on, money for food and water for the car ride. After a quick debate on music selection, we were off. In the 45 minutes that it took to get to the prison we had played eye-spy, sang songs, discussed favourite foods, pets and tried to figure out why the clouds were chasing us.

As we walked from the DPFC car park to the front gate, I could see that the kids were excited but also apprehensive. After going through security, telling jokes and laughing on our way to the visitors centre the youngest child suddenly broke away from us and ran towards the glass door. She could see her Mum waiting on the other side. Tears in her eyes, a smile on her face and arms outstretched. The other two children quickly followed and before too long they were all in a tearful embrace.

The visit lasted 4 hours.

Two of the children slept the whole way home. But the eldest sat gazing out the window for most of the trip, holding onto the bracelet her and her Mum had just made together.

**names changed*

"Without Prison Network, I would not be here today, I know I wouldn't be. They have been with me every step of the way; never judging me, just working with me to build my life back up again. I am forever grateful to Prison Network and so are my children and family."

The fastest growing cohort of Australia's prison population is women

Most have committed non-violent offences, and many are themselves victims of horrific domestic abuse

One immediate consequence is that women are separated from their children, who are thereby made victims of the same systemic failure

NEVER GAVE UP



Jane* grew up in a home filled with domestic violence, often witnessing her father assaulting her mother. As a young woman she found herself in a relationship experiencing the same kind of abuse, which caused significant trauma. In 1992 she was in a car accident where her brother was seriously injured. He was placed on life support and died several years later. Jane turned to alcohol as a way to cope and escape from the harsh realities of her life and memories. This led to a lifestyle of crime, particularly illegal drug use.

Jane tried to make changes. She attended rehabilitation and counselling and connected with Prison Network while in prison many years ago. She made some progress but did not find freedom from her addictions and destructive lifestyle. Three years ago, her addiction was again out of control. Jane decided to try rehabilitation again. A Prison Network volunteer mentor supported her emotionally and practically through this time. At rehab Jane worked through some of her childhood memories and issues. When she was released from rehabilitation a year ago, she connected with the Prison Network Post-Release Support Groups, staff and volunteers. This time something had shifted for Jane.

It was difficult to find employment and meaningful work due to her criminal record, which also created a barrier to her connecting back into the community. Jane drew a lot of encouragement from Prison Network's Outside Discussion Group and her Prison Network mentor. She began volunteering with an organisation that assists people with drug and alcohol issues. Today she is employed as a Consumer Consultant with the same organisation. What was once a barrier to her obtaining employment has qualified her for the role she is in today.

Her life is an example of someone who never gave up. Jane persisted in seeking help, making good community connections, and reaching out for support from her Prison Network mentor.

Jane is now resilient, empathetic and full of hope. She is helping others who share her experiences.

**name changed*

“When you're in prison, you feel alone and you feel like you are the lowest form of life. Prison Network puts some sort of meaning back in you as a human being. When you're in prison, that is very, very powerful.”

PROGRAMS

Prison Network connects with as many as 200 women a week. Our staff are a regular presence in the prisons providing immediate support to women who require assistance.

INSIDE PRISON



Craft & Cooking Weekly activities are held at DPFC and fortnightly at Tarrengower. Women build confidence, develop skills and make gifts they may share with their children. A welcome distraction from the often chaotic and unsettling experience of the prison environment and allows relationships to form with Prison Network volunteers.

1676
attendances

54
sessions



Fun With Mum is held at DPFC, creating opportunities for positive family connectedness, ensuring age-appropriate activities for the kids and their mothers. Builds healthy connections, positive memories, and increases the motivation for change.

291
mums and
454 kids attendances

32
sessions



Game On Day is held at DPFC every 5-6 weeks on a Saturday. This popular program provides women with the opportunity to play team sports such as netball, volleyball, and soccer against volunteers and staff. It provides a healthy physical activity and socialisation.

216
attendances

6
sessions



Fitness is held weekly at DPFC and encourages physical activity, teaches new skills and builds confidence, strength and fitness levels.

510
attendances

34
sessions



Faith and Life 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.

490
attendances

31
sessions



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

520
attendances

7
sessions

OUTSIDE PRISON



Post-Release Mentor and Support Program provides women leaving prison with intensive support, mentoring and material aid as they navigate their way into community reintegration and tackle the issues that led to their incarceration, such as addiction, homelessness, domestic violence and unemployment.

52
women supported



Friends and Faith Discussion Group follows the same format as the inside group, giving women further opportunities to discuss life issues in a supportive environment. Currently the group connects through Zoom, allowing women to join us from regional and remote Victoria.

270
attendances

50
sessions



Zoom Chat Group grew out of the popularity of the Friends and Faith Discussion Group and a desire for connection during the COVID-19 restrictions. This group provides support and mentorship, and the opportunity to discuss deeper issues.

40
attendances

12
sessions



Camps: Children whose mother is or has been in prison are sponsored to attend camps run by CYC. These are a great opportunity for children who have suffered trauma, to experience fun and adventure in a positive nurturing environment.

13
kids attended

3
camps



Transitional Accommodation and Support: is provided to women exiting prison and is coupled with intensive support. Nearly 90% of women who participate in our transitional accommodation program don't return to prison.

"I can't even put into words really, the flat (transitional accommodation) has helped me to pick up the pieces of my life. This is the first time I have had a stable place to live. Prison Network has done so much more than just put a roof over my head, you have given me my life back."

87%

of women prisoners have been victims of trauma and abuse

65%

have been a victim of family violence

49%

have experienced at least one form of child abuse

30%

experienced homelessness before imprisonment

Over 40%

are homeless upon release from prison



COVID-19 REPORT

March 2020 was a month like no other for everyone across the globe. Prison Network, and the women we serve, were also deeply impacted. Our in-prison programs were halted and volunteers were no longer permitted into the prisons. Our support work within the prisons was allowed to continue and was a lifeline for many women as they were no longer able to see their friends and families.

In lieu of our usual programs, the team developed innovative ways to provide support to women in prison.

Fun With Mum: We developed and provided children's packs available to mums to send to their children.

Craft and Cooking: To break up the challenges of the mundane day-to-day, we developed and provided activity packs for the women to complete independently. Almost 800 packs have been circulated across DPFC and Tarrengower.

Activity Sheets: The most surprising success has been the distribution of our weekly activity sheets across both prisons. They include colouring-in, puzzles, origami, recipes and other activities. Mums also use these to cut out pictures and send with a note to their children. These have been a huge hit with the women and Corrections Victoria as they provide an opportunity for the women to focus their time and energy in a productive and mindful pursuit.

Our facilitated face-to-face post-release group sessions were moved to Zoom. This has enabled us to broaden our reach, and see our program attract many women from regional and remote areas who have up to now not been able to participate.

Although we know that COVID-19 has been an incredibly trying time for the women within the prisons, we are grateful that we have been able to continue to find new and creative ways to provide support and continue our important work.

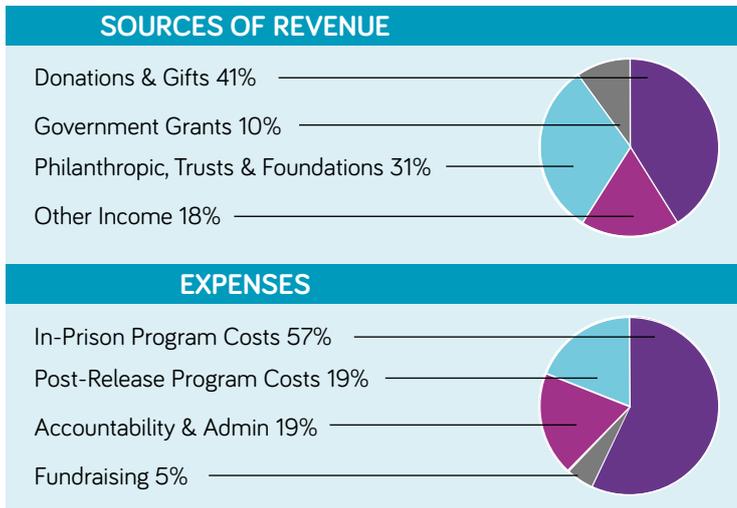
"I gave up on everything until I came across a Prison Network Support Worker. I've never met anyone with such a huge heart to give out her time to somebody as worthless and broken as myself."

THE FINANCES

The financial statements for 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020 for Prison Network Ministries are audited by RDL Accountants. A full set of the audited financial statements is available on the Prison Network website.

	FY1920	
Revenue Sources	\$	%
Donations & Gifts	207,643	41%
Government Grants	47,650	10%
Philanthropic, Trusts & Foundations	158,088	31%
Other Income	89,480	18%
Total Income	502,861	100%
Expenses	\$	
In-Prison Program Costs	188,200	57%
Post-Release Program Costs	62,926	19%
Accountability and Admin	63,256	19%
Fundraising	16,144	5%
Total Expenses	330,526	100%
Net Surplus	172,335	

Employees as at...	30.6.20	30.6.19
FT	1	1
PT	4	2
Casual	2	2
Total Employees	7	5
Full Time Equivalent (FTE)	3.20	2.20
	# FTE	# FTE
Front-line staff	4 2.60	3 2.00
Back-office staff	3 0.60	2 0.20
Volunteers	65	63
Board Members	7	9



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 help us reach more women. Donations welcome: www.prisonnetwork.org.au/donate
All donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

WE SINCERELY THANK THE FOLLOWING SUPPORTERS WHO HAVE SUPPORTED OUR WORK AND PROVIDED MUCH NEEDED FUNDING DURING THE PAST YEAR



Prison Network also relies on the generous support received from private donors, churches, businesses and bequests. Thank you.

Prison Network Ministries is registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for profits Commission (ACNC) and will be disclosing its financial performance in the 2020 Annual Information Statement, which will be lodged with the ACNC and will be available via the ACNC's Charity Register.