



Research Publication

Inside...Out:

**A survey of visitors to New South
Wales Correctional Centres**

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Chief Research Officer

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NSW Department of Corrective Services

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Correctional Centres**

A study carried out under the initiative
of the



International Year of the Family
1994

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SEPTEMBER, 1996.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This survey of visitors to New South Wales Correctional Centres was carried out as part of the Department of Corrective Services' contribution to the International Year of the Family (1994).

The survey resulted from an initiative begun by Justice Action and CRC Justice Support. I wish to thank Liz West of CRC Justice Support for her many efforts in keeping the links open to the community organisations involved and for her active support throughout the project. I also wish to thank Brett Collins and Don Little of Justice Action for their work and support in the project.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MAINTAINING THE LINK

Results of an Official Survey of Visitors to NSW Correctional Centres:

A survey of visitors to NSW correctional centres was carried out as part of the Department of Corrective Services' contribution to the International Year of the Family (1994).

The survey resulted from an initiative begun by Justice Action and CRC Justice Support. Extensive negotiations between these community organisations and the Department resulted in surveys being sent to over 5,000 visitors.

A major aim of the survey was to develop an accurate profile of visitors to NSW correctional centres and to assess their needs.

More than 1100 questionnaires were fully completed and returned by visitors.

Results of the survey showed that:

- 73 % of visitors were female;
- their ages ranged from two years to 87 years, with 50% being aged less than 38 years;
- 76% were born in Australia;
- 6% were Australian Aborigines or Torres Strait Islanders and
- 41% were directly caring for children.

Comments:

The visitors were asked to make suggestions or comments about the visiting facilities at the correctional centre they visited.

64% made written comments. These were passed on to the relevant Governors and Regional Commanders.

The most common comments were:

- More should be done for children visitors e.g. play areas, toys, videos, appropriate food and drinks able to be bought, and baby formula warming facilities.
- More attention should be paid to areas where visitors wait for their visits. At some correctional centres intending visitors are exposed to weather extremes as they have to wait in the open.
- Visiting areas are too small for the number of visitors. The resulting overcrowding causes a lack of privacy and discomfort and limits the duration of each visit.

- More use should be made of outside areas/courtyards so that noisy children will not cause problems during visits.
- There are inconsistencies about what officers allow to be taken into visits e.g. handbags, unopened cigarette packets, lollies, drink cartons.
- Tea and coffee facilities are not generally available.
- Toilets are not available in some visiting areas (e.g. Parramatta and the Long Bay Remand Centre) causing visits to be terminated if a visitor has to go to the toilet.
- For some visitors travelling long distances involved significant costs and inconvenience.
- The less than ideal physical conditions of some visiting areas such as Parramatta and some sections of Long Bay, reflect the old age of these centres.
- More wholesome food, such as sandwiches and fruit, should be available from visiting area vending machines.

Who Visits:

- Parents were the most likely to be visitors (28%) with wives the next most likely (21%).
- More than half of those taking part in the survey visited at least once a week.
- More than half the visitors brought children for a visit.

Reasons for Visits:

- 63% visited to maintain relationships.
- 48% visited to keep the family together and let children visit their parents.

Frequency of Visits:

- 53% of visitors visited once a week while 20% visited every two weeks.

Six distinct areas of concern were identified by the visitors:

- The provision of information;
- the care of children;
- transportation issues;
- facilities provided in visiting areas;
- visiting hours and
- treatment by staff.

Provision of Information:

29% described information supplied by the Department about visiting rights and condition as either poor or non-existent, while a further 29% said it was only fair.

Others stated that:

- Information was not automatically supplied and was only given when visitors asked for it.
- The only information supplied was provided by the inmate.
- Some were given the wrong advice by officers when they asked for information.
- There was a critical lack of information for inmates in custody for the first time and for their visitors.

The care of Children:

52% of visitors replied that they brought children with them when they visited.

About 53% of all visitors said facilities provided for children were either poor or non-existent, while 47% described the facilities in the range of fair to excellent.

Transportation:

The vast majority of visitors used their own cars, bikes or walked to correctional centres.

Only 10% used public transport, which may reflect the fact that many correctional centres are not accessible by public transport.

Travelling times spanned a large range of times from 5 minutes to 24 hours. 50% of visitors took less than 75 minutes to complete their trip one way, while 35% took less than 40 minutes.

Facilities in Visiting Areas:

The majority of visitors rated facilities in visiting areas to be in the range of “good” to “fair”.

- 30% said the overall space made available for visits was poor.
- 25% complained that the area set aside for waiting to start a visit was poor.
- 44% described drink and food machines as excellent or good, but the need for hot foods, barbecues and canteens was mentioned quite often.

Visiting Hours:

42% said limited visiting hours or days were never or rarely a problem for them.

Others stated that weekday visiting did not suit them (26%), while a slightly smaller number had difficulty visiting at weekends.

Some thought visiting should be available seven days a week and others said there was a need for extended hours on visiting days.

The barriers to visiting were considered to be:

- Travelling long distances (27%);
- financial costs (19%);
- work commitments (10%);
- only weekend visits allowed at centre (12%) and
- inmate only allowed two visits per week (4%).

Treatment by Staff:

The majority of visitors (73%) stated they were always or often politely treated by departmental staff. Written comments blamed procedures rather than staff for problems such as delayed visiting times.

ACTION ARISING FROM THE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A visitors handbook containing standard information about visiting has been printed and distributed.
2. Local additions to the visiting rules concerning conditions at a particular centre, such as visiting hours, are now posted on visitors notice boards in Correctional Centres.
3. Consideration is being given to the introduction of consultative groups at institutions to discuss how the visiting area is operating and implementation of visiting policy.
4. The department is considering formulation of a statewide consultative group to receive reports and give guidance to institutional consultative groups and to monitor visiting conditions around the State.
5. The Corrective Services Academy has developed specialist training modules for visits staff which includes sections on customer focus, dealing with complaints and visits' procedures.
6. \$500,000 has been provided for an upgrade to visit facilities during 1996/97; changes will focus on visitors/child friendly facilities. This includes the provision of disabled access and play areas for children.
7. Consideration is being given to a Children's Visitation Program, such as that conducted in Michigan, USA, for trial at Emu Plains Correctional Centre for Women and selected minimum security male institutions.
8. A standard grievance handling procedure has been introduced.
9. Monitoring of correctional centre visiting areas is now included in the duties of Regional Commanders.

10. To help implement grievance and information procedures the following have been introduced:
 - Signs displaying the visitors service commitment, the Governor's name, the name of the officer in charge of the visiting area and details of items not permitted to be brought into visits.
 - A complaint/suggestions box.
11. All information for visitors is in the process of being translated into the major community languages.
12. A directive has been issued that the standard visiting package should be sent to family members and friends nominated by an inmate on his/her first entry into custody.

INTRODUCTION

Beginnings: International Year of the Family

The United Nations declared 1994 to be the *International Year of the Family* (IYF) with the general aim of increasing awareness of family issues among governments, the private sector and the community alike. More specifically the central themes for IYF were identified by the then New South Wales Government (*Building Communities That Care*, 1994) as parenting, fairness in family relationships and family friendly communities. In *Valuing The Family* (1994) the government posited that “families are the core unit of society”(1994:8). This raises more issues than it solves as was candidly put by Bagnall (1994) in her article in the Bulletin on the IYF entitled “Year of the Very Wide Definition”. Just who and what constitutes a “family” has become increasingly complex. In the lead up to IYF certain political parties declared in policy platforms that a “family” was simply a married couple with children. Ranged against this view were ideas where “family” was seen to be comprised from a diverse array of social, economic, legal and cultural imperatives. Common to all these views was the idea that a need for cohesion, support and shared beliefs was what really defined a “family” irrespective of current legal definitions.

As part of its commitment to the IYF, the New South Wales Department of Corrective Services (hereafter - the Department), undertook several initiatives that were in keeping with the government’s instruction that “all policies and programs should be monitored to take into account the impact on families and members of families” (*Focusing on Families*, 1994:3). A direct consequence of this was that “services to families should have a genuine consumer focus” (*Focusing on Families*, 1994:4). To this end, the Department’s initiatives for IYF included the issue of a \$5 telephone card to all inmates with the specific intent of assisting in the maintenance of family relationships. The cards were programmed to provide telephone dialling access to inmate nominated family members only. Relating to staff, the Department was seen to maintain its commitment to “family friendly communities” through its contribution to the child care facility at Long Bay Correctional Complex - a complex of institutions that house up to one third of the state’s inmates. The Department also undertook to provide funds and organisational resources to conduct regular Family Day picnics for all staff members where officers and other staff were entitled to attend a full day event where food and entertainment was provided.

Another important contribution that the Department made to the maintenance of contact between inmates and their families was the continuing upgrading of correctional centre visiting facilities. Internal documents from the Capital Works Branch of the Department reveal that the expenditure on visiting facilities from 1988 to 1994 was over \$13 million and included upgrades to facilities throughout the state. In order to provide a special service for Junee Correctional Centre the Department, in conjunction with CRC Justice Support introduced new visitor transport and accommodation arrangements at this 600 bed facility which is located some 450 kilometres from metropolitan Sydney. It is these initiatives that have provided the impetus to test whether any of these actions have translated into benefits for those families who find themselves in the position of having and wanting to visit their family members who have been incarcerated.

Origin of the visitors survey

In 1994, Justice Action and CRC Justice Support, as well as other interested community groups including the Prisoners' Action Group approached the Department intending to conduct their own survey of visitors' experiences with New South Wales Correctional Centres as part of the IYF. As the experience and resources these community based groups could make available to do such a survey were quite limited, the opportunity to work together with these groups became a very real possibility for the Department. Extensive negotiations took place between members of Justice Action, CRC Justice Support and the Department with the ultimate result being that the Department agreed to implement the original survey proposed by Justice Action with minor changes and additions.¹

Because Justice Action is an activist group which has long been critical of the Department, it is a tribute to all concerned that agreement was finally reached to work together on a visitors survey. This agreement was due in no small part to the active participation by CRC Justice Support who offered to act as the "honest broker" between all those involved in the survey.² In its own words "CRC was set up to act as a bridge between the correctional system and the community".

Why focus on corrections?

A very early question that was asked was why should there be any special attention paid to the families of inmates in the first place? In line with their advocacy role, CRC Justice Support stressed in the letter that eventually accompanied the visitors survey questionnaire that "prisoners families as a special group with unique needs were being neglected in the International Year of the Family". This reaction occurred in no small part because no specific mention was made in the literature produced for the IYF by the then government regarding families affected by the imprisonment of one of their members. However, in the material produced for IYF certain headings appear that are very appropriate to these families. For example, in *Valuing the Family* (1994:12) the then New South Wales Premier talks of "families and family members under stress". Under this heading specific mention is made of those families where "family breakdown, domestic violence, abuse, illness, homelessness or unemployment may mean that for some period, members of families require care and protection". It could be argued that inmates families are more likely to have experienced not just one but several of these events in combination not only as precursors to imprisonment but more importantly as a consequence of imprisonment. Stress and imprisonment are synonyms, not only for the inmate who is imprisoned but also for those families who are affected by that imprisonment. This might encompass a continuum of crisis events ranging from the loss of the "bread winner" through to the psychological impact of losing the presence of a parent on a young child.

Another heading in *Valuing the Family* (1994:18) is "Disadvantaged families". Investigating the link between socioeconomic reality and imprisonment has spawned a very long and troubled literature. Certainly families who have lost the resources of a family member to imprisonment, (resources being not simply limited to financial matters), can be seen to *become* disadvantaged. They not only can be seen to become disadvantaged in the short term, as the imprisonment has been likened in the literature to indelibly marking the family to the community at large. Even

though this may arise only in family members' minds and not in reality, this can often be of considerable concern to those affected. This has often been reported as being the case following or even because of the eventual release from custody of the family member - especially for the families of those whose crime was particularly vicious or unacceptable to the community.

The sub-headings used under "Disadvantaged families" (*Valuing the family*, 1994:18) certainly strike a resonant chord with the families affected by imprisonment. "Family members out of work", "Assisting Aboriginal families", "Assisting families into housing", "Assistance with the cost of Government Services" are a litany of disasters all too familiar to the clients of CRC Justice Support and other agencies charged with helping the families of the imprisoned. As Jorgensen, Hernandez and Warren (1986:47) put it:

"For most inmates who face a prison term, their families will also begin a sentence: of physical, social and psychological hardship. They will do so, in most instances, with a minimum of resources to draw upon and with little power to meet the additional demands on their trouble-plagued lives".

If those families faced with the imprisonment of a family member, especially if that person is the "primary income worker", are not disadvantaged in the first place they certainly can become disadvantaged very quickly. Again as Jorgensen, Hernandez and Warren (1986:52) see it:

"In assisting families of inmates, we are dealing with severely disjointed, weakened, often demoralized family units, in which the incarceration of a family member is the culminating event in a long history of adversity".

Social Impact Assessment?

In keeping with the expressed New South Wales Government concern to have "better communities through social impact assessment" (Social Policy Directorate, 1994), this study is modelled on the concepts outlined in the material produced to help conduct social impact assessments. Although the drive for social impact assessments had its origins in America in relation to the development of that nation's hydro-electric schemes, it has been argued (Social Policy Directorate, 1994:5) that it is a mistake to limit such studies to such large and capital intensive projects. Even though this study is not a typical example of what is thought of as a social impact assessment, the expressed characteristics of a social impact assessment of "action focussed, time bound, practically oriented, participatory", (Social Policy Directorate, 1994:6) certainly formed the basis for much of the current study. In broad terms, the need to "be broad in scope, provide a relevant social profile, focus on and assess significant issues, carefully weigh-up impacts" (Social Policy Directorate, 1994: 34) are not elements simply limited to social impact assessments, they are basic research elements that should always be addressed.

Aims of Study

All of the above elements described as being necessary for a social impact assessment are to be found in this study. The involvement of external agencies or community groups was central to not only the conduct but also the genesis of the research project. Their participation was an essential element in the design of the survey. This study has at its centre the development of a social profile of visitors to New South Wales Correctional Centres. This study addresses the significant issues faced by these visitors in terms of what they think of the facilities that they confront each time they visit a correctional centre and what they would prefer to encounter. However, the needs of these visitors must be tempered by the security needs of the Department. Duty of care, rehabilitation, and inmates-visitors rights, are all to be weighed against the need to maintain good order and management of the correctional centres together with the need to protect the community and the visitors themselves. This balance is a critical one and its impact is fundamental to the operation of the correctional centres themselves. As could be expected, all these matters did in fact feature in the majority of the responses collected by the study.

It is always important to place the findings of any survey within the context of relevant international literature. A comprehensive literature review which focused on correctional centre visitation was also considered to be a central aim of this study. It is only when an examination of previous literature has been completed that the true significance of the results found can be realised and judged.

As seen by Schafer (1994:18) in a seemingly perennial exploration of any links between visits and success following release to parole,

"The contribution of visits to [success on parole] is not entirely clear ... the visit may serve [both] as a reminder of the world outside the prison and as an antidote to institutionalisation".

The world of the "outside" being brought to the inmates on the "inside" through the visitor. Just who these visitors are and what they think when they visit correctional centres in New South Wales is the focus of this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Why Bother ?

Just as we have already asked and answered why we should focus on corrections, we should also ask why should we bother investigating visiting to correctional centres in particular at all ?

As Homer (1979:47) puts it;

"Why should criminal justice personnel concern themselves with the families of prisoners? While we can muster verbal sympathy for them as "second victims of crime", the number and complexity of problems inherent and germane to our criminal justice system already appear overwhelming and insoluble. Why not let the social workers concern themselves with the prisoners family?"

This very contentious question is one that is at the core of the relevant literature, although it is rarely advanced in such bold terms. However, as already posited in the previous section dealing with the aims of the study, visitors to correctional centres are linkages to the outside world. In quite pragmatic terms Hairston (1988:50) advances that:

"Families provide concrete resources such as money and clothing to the prisoner, influence his or her help-seeking behaviour.....and provide him or her with information about life outside the walls and family activities. The ongoing maintenance of these networks mitigates the effects of the institution, sustains the prisoner during imprisonment and supports the transition from the prison to community".

Hairston (1988) reviewed five empirical studies which focused on the presumed link between family ties and post release success that had been conducted up to the early 1980's. These studies included those by Holt and Miller (1972), Adams and Fisher (1976), Burstein (1977), Leclair (1978), and Howser and McDonald (1982).

Although all these studies found consistently strong links between family ties and post release success, they all failed to say why these ties should make a difference. If Hairston (1988) is to be believed then the primacy of the link between the inmate and the outside world, as expressed through the visitor to the correctional centre, is just such a primary link that correctional administrators would be foolish to ignore. correctional administrators have certainly been aware of this link for many years, even though the structure of this link has often been simply left to "experience" as so candidly and pragmatically put by Fenton (1959:17),

"Penologists have also begun to recognise the importance of family....the attitudes and behaviour of wife or parent while a man is incarcerated may have much to do with his deportment in prison....experienced prison workers are well aware of the consequences for good or ill of visits with relatives".

Inside.....Out

Hairston (1988:50) develops this from within a social work framework so that visitors to correctional centres "provide opportunities for nurturing and sustaining morale, a sense of security and well-being. They provide a reassurance of worth and attest to an individual's competence in a social role".

This was also taken up in part by Swartz and Weintraub (1974:26) in their psychological examination of the impact of a husband's incarceration on a wife - "the families of inmates have long been the invisible client group in the traditional social welfare system". This alone should prompt a closer look at the social dynamics involved in the networks inhabited by those who become a visitor to those within our correctional centres.

Turning back to the issue of success at parole, raised above in Hairston (1988), a closer look at the seminal work by Holt and Miller (1972) reveals many elements that cloud the underlying components with which the correctional centre visitor is faced. In essence, Holt & Miller (1972) found that being attached to some form of a family is critical to the positive outcome of the correctional process. Note that "family" in this sense is not prescriptive. What they also found was that a positive relationship existed between the maintenance of strong family ties while in prison and success at parole. Holt and Miller (1972) were in fact confirming earlier studies done by Ohlin (1954) and Glasser (1964). Ohlin (1954) after first developing an "index of family interest" found that 75% of inmates who were maintaining an "active family interest" whilst in custody were successful on parole. Glasser (1964) repeated this work and found 71% with an "active family interest" were successful on parole compared with only 50% of the "no contact with relatives" group.

Holt and Miller (1972) again found that there was a significant difference in the recidivism rate of inmates who had regular, continuing visits from family members compared to those who had no or only sporadic family visits. They found that some 70% who had regular family visitors were not re-arrested in the study period with the greater the number of visitors the greater the parole success. Their study stresses that strong social ties between an inmate and their "family" and friends helps to maintain their social contacts so that when they leave custody they are able to establish and maintain these same social contacts. Those inside must keep the links to the outside strong.

Holt and Miller (1972) also rightly addressed the issue of whether some other "differential motivation" was at work and was unwittingly interfering or confounding success at parole. Holt and Miller (1972:63) found,

"Those who maintained frequent family contacts received about as many disciplinary reports, had no better work records, were no more likely to participate in treatment programs, and did about the same in group counselling. In summary, all the evidence suggests that there is a strong, independent positive relationship between maintaining frequent family contacts while in prison and success on parole".

Wright and Wright (1992:56) summarize this literature in the following way:

"Among convicted criminals, maintaining an active family interest while incarcerated and the establishment of a mutually satisfying relationship after release were associated with decreases in subsequent re-offence. These findings suggest that adults may reach transitional points in their lives and that the quality of family life may alter an established trajectory".

Wright and Wright (1992) concluded in their study that it was the quality of the marriage or relationship, rather than the status itself that was important in affecting future behaviour. This argument is also supported by Fuller (1993) who not only sees benefits through reduced recidivism rates, but also improved mental health for inmates and family alike. Ditchfield (1994:8) summarises the research in the following way:

"The results of both detailed social research and large scale statistical studies strongly indicate that family ties and responsibilities may help reduce further offending..... The research also suggests that while positive gains can be made during the custodial experience, these gains are typically less important in influencing recidivism than the quality of the social environment to which the offender returns".

These are similar sentiments to those expressed by Hairston (1987:87) who adds that the maintenance of family ties during imprisonment is desirable but difficult.

In simple terms, as Jorgensen, Hernandez and Warren (1986:48) say;

"Society benefits from the protection of family life, not just for its own sake, but in terms of families and inmates..... for that reason alone, corrections would seem to have some investment in and responsibility toward these families".

But what is the reality of this discourse? Fuller (1993:41) may well say that the "literature on families of offenders points to the significant and unique role that the family can play in rehabilitation of the offender" but this is no answer in itself. As an earlier work by Hairston (1987:99) had already said, "(Her) literature review demonstrates that there is little understanding of prisoners family characteristics or relationships". One healthy element of doubt that could also be brought into this debate has been summarised by the Correctional Service of Canada (1995:8) as;

"What remains unclear is whether marriage and family life assist offenders and high-risk individuals in making a transition to a more conventional lifestyle or whether with age, offenders simply make the shift to a conventional lifestyle and gain a greater appreciation for family life".

What then for the correctional administrator? Pragmatists like Hairston (1987:10) would ask "how families can be used as an effective correctional resource", yet this can not be the whole story as it does not provide answers to very basic questions surrounding the administration of

imprisoned people. Answers are certainly required to those questions yet it is possible that the true impact of family contact with inmates may never be fully known. In answer to the basic questions of asking why bother even trying to understand, correctional administrators may find encouragement from the words of Homer (1979:52);

"Instead of viewing the prisoners family as one or more problems, perhaps we can further the common, frustrating goal of rehabilitation by understanding the role the prisoners family can fill as one of the most potent and practical tools we have available in the prisoner/criminal rehabilitation effort".

A Wider Social Context

Having just discussed the role and concerns common to correctional administrators developed in the section *Why Bother?* it is appropriate that we should now turn to consider a wider social context in order to discuss these very same issues incorporating wider analyses. The world is not just made of correctional centres, it consists of a rich tapestry of social interaction forming webs of association and dissociation wherever it will.

A social equity call from Donezolt (1979:50) asserts that:

"we should be directing our gaze to the brightly lit official stage where decisions are made before proceeding gradually to the semi-darkness of the place where these decisions are carried out".

To this thought should be added another which lies at the heart of this paper. As Jorgensen, Hernandez and Warren (1986) remind us, as the number of inmates incarcerated grows, so too does the number of family members affected by this imprisonment.

An important recent work that specifically deals with the intersection of home and the inmate from a sociological perspective is that by Ann Aungles (1994). Entitled "The Prison and the Home", Aungles' analysis combines a feminist critique of the State and a sociology of punishment to critically explore the boundaries that are erected by any form of incarceration and what underpins the construction of the setting of limits that enforce any boundaries created between "the home" and "the prison". (Aungles 1994:1) in fact argues that "the social control of corporate capitalist society occurs in its most condensed form in this social space : between "the home" and "the prison". She refers to the relative invisibility of the home affected by incarceration, and of having to locate just where the social reality of such a home lies in the dense maze of social interactions of a large social entity like the state of New South Wales.

Aungles (1994:6) has listed nine major propositions that form the basis of her examination. Of particular interest to us are six areas which state interalia that:

- ❑ Domesticity is incorporated into the system of punishment and control in Australia.
- ❑ The home and the prison are mutually interdependent yet also mutually incompatible.

- ❑ This contradiction is resolved by marginalising or formally making this association invisible.
- ❑ This puts major burdens on the family.
- ❑ This relationship has changed over time with changing philosophies relating to both the family and punishment.
- ❑ It is women rather than men who are usually stuck with the marginalised care of inmates.

There is in fact a double burden for women carers of incarcerated men to handle. Not only is there the care they exhibit to the incarcerated inmate, but this care must also extend to any children or other family members who form part of the inmate's family. This double burden is also threefold in nature with political, emotional and economic dimensions. These are no minor concerns as even one component of this triad, economic support, has been demonstrated by the Australian Bureau of Statistics to be quite significant to the economy. The ABS (1995) has shown that the value of unpaid housework and community work is \$227.8 billion or equal to 58 percent of Australia's gross domestic product.

It is debatable whether the ABS has even included in this huge amount the added resources expended by families (cost of visiting/providing money for inmate "buy ups" etc.) in their struggle to maintain their contact with incarcerated inmates. In purely economic terms, the imprisonment of the family provider has the effect of forcing the dependents left outside the prison walls to rely financially on any extended family, if available, or government assistance. Even in this economic arena then, there are forces at work which only serve to make families affected by imprisonment more invisible by forcing them to rely on their own families' support, or they are subsumed within the government's own general social welfare system.

As Aungles (1994) sees it, what is really occurring is an exploitation and punishment of the families of inmates. She sees that this will continue until community and public agencies alike actually expend energy to make these invisible family "punishments" visible by exposing them to media examination or by being officially recognised for what they are by government.

These perceptions are not so new in a literature that, while acknowledging that these dimensions may well exist, fails to critically examine what forces are actually at work behind the scenes. This is best illustrated in Ferraro, Jorgensen and Bolton (1983:575) who state;

"When an individual is sent to prison, other persons such as family members, lovers and friends also suffer from the imprisonment, and experience various kinds of problems because of it. This diffuses the effect of punishment on the individual and greatly complicates an evaluation of prisons and their effectiveness".

As forcefully stated by Aungles (1994), there has been an extension of penalty, no matter how hidden, to the carers of those in custody. There has been an incorporation of control over the inmate through the use of the family. The family is reconstituted as a "reward" for the inmate. Control is, in fact, extended over the carers themselves.

This extension of state control onto the family of an inmate has been seen to reach new heights by the feminist literature, with the home being reconstructed as the prison now through the development of new community based control mechanisms - epitomised by the introduction of home detention or intensive community supervision (an inmate who must remain in his own house for a certain period and whose presence is monitored by electronic bracelets and/or officer visits). As Aungles (1994:71) sees it "the moral sphere of the home has been incorporated into the wider moral public sphere of penalty in a number of complex forms".

However good their intentions, non State intervention through religious and private non-profit groups (see Fishman (1979), Hornick (1991) and Coombs (1991)) can also be seen to be extending control over an individual by direct and indirect intrusion into the home life of families of inmates. A non-profit program which uses trained volunteers to support and assist women at sentencing and in first visits to prison as described by Fishman (1979) is an excellent support to those who find themselves in this kind of turmoil, but what do these volunteers become through this support? Likewise in the Welcome House Program described by Hornick (1991), a visitors' centre attached to FOLSOM prison where Volunteers of America staff an integrated child care centre, the State has been seen to have apparently incorporated other willing bodies in the exercise of its power. For example, children must visit the incarcerated father first before they are allowed entry to the child care centre and this must be enforced by the volunteers if they are to continue to receive funding.

Although such criticism may seem harsh being directed against those who are only trying to help in situations where every bit of help is needed, it is always prudent to step back and examine why such activity is taking place in the first place. The family of an incarcerated person, once exposed from the cloak of invisibility that normally surrounds it, occupies an extraordinary and contradictory place. These families are both blamed for the individual's "criminality" and are also held responsible for fixing it. The family becomes the "primary treatment agency", but it would seem that it is a flawed agency in that it needs help according to the "experts" (Aungles (1994:82));

"In this literature, family visits are no help in reducing recidivism unless the social science experts intervene. Norman Holt and Donald Miller's influential paper argues that unless supplemented by family counselling these visits may be of no help to any necessary family readjustments after the inmates release".

A major argument is that all major theories of criminality contain assumptions, both manifest and obscure, about the nature of the family of the inmate. Genetic theories of crime take any control completely away from the family, except to ask the parents of an inmate why they had any children at all. In Subcultural Criminality, epitomised by Miller (1958) and Banfield (1958), the family, in simply belonging to a "class" or a deviant subculture, causes criminal behaviour. Sutherland and Cressey (1966) extended this to form the Differential Association theory where learning a series of subcultural values, as taught by family members in the first instance, presumably leads to criminal behaviour. In Conflict theory explanations Vold (1986) a pupil of Simmel, saw that humans are fundamentally group-involved beings with attendant group identification and group loyalties. Conflict between groups helps identify and solidify membership/loyalty to a group. Families are seen to constitute a fundamental group within society.

The concept of involving the family of an inmate in any rehabilitation effort has early roots in the prison reform agenda in New South Wales. Aungles (1994:116) paraphrases Justice Nagle's Report of the Royal Commission into New South Wales Prisons to say : "wives and girlfriends are not only the focus of an intense need for attachment, they are seen as the people whose *duty* it is to provide emotional nurturance".

The links that are trying to be forged between "the home" and "the prison" have many consequences both for those inside and outside. As the most common outside carer for inmate families, wives, are giving service to the State by caring for the inmate in financial, physical and emotional terms. These connections are not simple as illustrated by Aungles (1994:123);

"The nexus between caring and dependency as it is currently constituted means that becoming the outside carer of a prisoner has the potential for involving women in a complex set of dependant relationships with penal, welfare, housing and education bureaucracies".

Emotional and Psychological Pressures

The outside carer, usually a wife /female partner or the mother of the inmate has not only then to deal with the incarcerated male as well the family, they also have to negotiate a rocky path which winds around several government agencies. This negotiation process is hard enough, yet previous studies have shown that there are also severe personal psychological problems to be overcome as well. This is particularly so for imprisoned mothers who, as seen by Sametz (1980) are immediate targets as the imprisonment causes the mother to be classed as an unfit parent, even though her questionable behaviour is in her past and may not necessarily be a proper predictor of her future behaviour.

Swartz and Weintraub (1974:21) saw many parallels with the process of bereavement in their study of prisoners' wives;

"Many problems encountered are similar to those encountered when a family member dies, but there is one important difference: the man is very much alive and will one day probably return to the family. In addition, his absence from the family has usually been caused by acts which are socially unacceptable. Thus, at the same time that a family is dealing with the shock of dismemberment, it must also deal with shame, and with the creation of a new relationship with the family member who is living while dead".

So, in addition to a great deal of grief and fear, the outside carers are also faced with shame, anger and confusion. The questions arise in their minds of how will we manage, how much should the children know about what has happened and how will my friends and neighbours react when they find out?

The whole web of family and community relationships that previously existed is forced into often very painful re-evaluations. As Swartz and Weintraub (1974) documented, there is often pressure from the wife's parents to break with the husband who has been imprisoned, and this is a reality

that often has to be faced daily as the wife becomes dependant on her family's support. There is pressure exerted by the incarcerated husband's family who may blame the wife, either overtly or covertly, for the husband's fate. New relationships are to be made everywhere. Even the act of mourning turns into a new relationship to be handled differently as the rituals that surround the loss of a husband to death are not played out for his loss to imprisonment, yet the support needed is almost exactly the same.

It has been shown in the literature that there are many psychological stresses, other than that associated with the financial burdens incurred, that the outside carer has to face. For a wife there is the classic situation where the incarcerated husband is wanting to make concrete decisions regarding the family that the wife may not agree with for various reasons including that the demands made are actually impossible. This places the wife in an untenable position where she is only able to lose whatever choice is made.

This attempt to maintain a role as head of the family in absentia, while also losing touch with the day-to-day realities of what the family has to face places extraordinary strain on all involved. In his review of the literature for the British Home Office, Ditchfield (1994) specifically mentions that inmates consistently underestimate the difficulties faced by their partners/families in coping with their absence and recommends that something should be done by correctional administration to rectify this situation. One such step considered by Giveans (1988:16) to be essential, is for incarcerated fathers to be taught about their children through child development classes;

“As they consider ways of becoming better fathers, they are also learning to become better husbands. Needless to say children will also significantly gain from incarcerated fathers' interest in their world”.

Children

Certainly the literature dealing with the impact of imprisonment on the children of inmates is quite large and direct in its recommendations. Work done in New South Wales by Social Research and Evaluation Ltd (1982) for the Family and Childrens Services Agency makes a call for a redirection in public policy with regard to government assistance for children of an imprisoned parent boldly stating;

“Hundreds of children will continue to suffer - not because their parents are all inherently incapable of providing nurturance or support, but because they are systematically prevented from doing so”.

Likewise in America, Bloom and Steinhart (1993) have completed a reassessment of an earlier study (1978) carried out for the National Council on Crime and Delinquency on the needs of the children of those incarcerated entitled “Why punish the children?”. This large report provides many detailed recommendations and presents a national agenda for reform in visiting and children's rights that could be adopted in any country.

Stanton (1980:125) reminds us that government intervention to resolve such issues is not as straight forward as it seems with an illustration that change is not assured even by legislation,

“California has long had legislation allowing young children to remain with their imprisoned mother, though it has not been implemented”. Even as small a practical measure as ensuring that correctional administrators record whether a female inmate has any dependent children on entry to gaol was highlighted as being absurd by its absence.

Logan (1992:160) calls for more correctional centres, where “the visiting area provides a quiet home like atmosphere for the children to visit”. Stumbo (1991) sees value in having camping weekends so that the children may experience a relaxed setting for their visit and Jose-Kampfer (1991) describes an ideal setting in a women’s correctional centre in Michigan. In the Childrens Visitation Program (CVP) Jose-Kampfer (1991) describes a visiting centre where there are no uniformed officers present, the visit lasts for three hours, the children are not accompanied by other adults so that they get to spend time alone with their mother, there is a extensive range of toys, games, art, reading and other educational materials provided and the governing body is comprised of ten inmates elected by the other inmates.

Jose-Kampfer (1991) has shown that many children of an incarcerated parent suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, with the CVP recognising this and having a clinical psychologist in charge of the visiting room.

Freidman and Esselstyn (1965) found a decrease in school performance in children of an incarcerated parent, although this study has been severely criticised as the children were not pre-tested. Sack, Siedler and Thomas (1976) found that children of an incarcerated parent were observed to be more aggressive toward each other, less obedient and more “anti-social”. Hinds (1981) found that there was an immense insecurity associated with the knowledge that the parent was helpless and impotent and that this was devastating to the child’s own self image.

That the stressed behaviour of a child in visiting an incarcerated parent is often only symptomatic of a deeper malaise in the family was illustrated by Carlson and Cervera (1991) in their evaluation of a Family Reunion Program, (FRP) in New York. They found that both those inmates in the experimental FRP and those who weren’t were similar on the “cohesion” traits they measured - both groups were rated as “chaotic”. A certain rigidity in the family, a tendency to maintain the status quo, limited or erratic leadership, the use of passive - aggressive behaviour all combined with inconsistent rule making often ended with children constantly trying to undermine any control exercised by the parent(s) through endless negotiation or outright rebellion. This was especially evident at visiting times to correctional centres.

Yet control is the ultimate aim of the correctional administrator, whether through direct manipulation of the visitation rights of an inmate or not. As Ditchfield (1990:101) says in his review of the literature on control in prisons for the British Home Office, “the evidence suggests that inmates do indeed attach importance to visits but that its incentive effects are far from clear”. Correctional centre visits “are in fact quite artificial” as we are reminded by Jorgensen, Hernandez and Warren (1986:49) with the situations encountered being far removed from those routinely experienced outside the correctional centre.

Visits to a correctional centre must always remain a product of the control exercised by the correctional administrator. That the individuals who take part in the performance that is a

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correctional centre visit bring a multitude of aspirations, needs, and desires all formed by their interactions outside custody can not be denied. The trick is to recognise this for what it is worth, to bring a wider social context consideration to any examination of what it is like to visit an inmate in a correctional centre and to make judgements and conditions which are balanced for all concerned.

It is obvious that visitors must bring with them all the pressures they encounter on the outside. As the literature has shown these pressures include psychological stress, especially in the case of a wife who has children to care for as well as the inmate. The children of these carers not only cause concern, they have their own concerns themselves. The lessening of this psychological stress by the introduction of as much "normal" family interaction/settings as is possible is only one way such change could be achieved.

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What then does this mean to the inmate? A correctional centre visitor must of necessity bring the outside world into the correctional centre. This outside world has its own myriad of social contexts/pressures and reactions. The visitor must not only cope with this whilst on the outside, but more importantly, the visitor must manage these pressures in their interactions with the "inside" world of the correctional centre and inmate. What makes this more difficult is that the coping strategies learned on the outside are often no longer applicable on the inside. These coping strategies in effect become directed by the "inside" world of corrections - they are turned "inside...out", a situation where life for the visitor on the outside can be controlled by the forces of the "inside" world of corrections. For example, official visiting times can directly dictate the normal routine of family life on the outside; when to shop, children's attendance at pre-school/school, how much the family can spend on necessities once the cost of visiting is removed, when and what kind of meals can be provided.

However, this process of turning a visitor's life "inside... out" is not merely limited to practicalities and physicalities. It is a process that should be seen to have profound effects on the psychological well-being of the family as a whole.

METHODOLOGY

As was noted earlier in the introduction to this study, the Department was first approached by Justice Action and CRC Justice Support, two community groups, that wanted to conduct their own survey of visitors to New South Wales Correctional Centres. Their original intention was to leave printed questionnaires in the visiting areas of all New South Wales Correctional Centres, which they hoped would be completed and returned by mail to a central post office box. There were several problems associated with this proposal which ultimately led to the consultative development of an alternate strategy. Among the problems highlighted by the original proposal were those centred on the self-select, unsupervised nature of distribution of the questionnaires. The Department was concerned that if the questionnaires were simply left unattended in the visiting areas then there could be no assurance that all visitors would even notice the box of questionnaires let alone complete them. There was also concern that there could be scope for staff to alter the response by completing the questionnaires instead of the visitors. These problems were compounded by the fact that the completed questionnaires were not reply paid so requiring the respondents to purchase a stamp for transmission of the folded questionnaire through the post.

With all these circumstances mitigating against the success of a representative sample of visitors, it became apparent that the Department would be better placed to help conduct the survey itself rather than have to respond to any report produced from the original data collection strategy proposed by the two community agencies.

Five different strategies were identified by the Research and Statistics Unit of the Department as being available to conduct just such a visitor survey. These methodologies were :

- A mail-out questionnaire - with reply paid envelope;
- questionnaires handed out at the visitors' centres;
- interviews with visitors at centres;
- a telephone survey and
- contact made through inmates.

Each of these strategies have their own inherent strengths and weaknesses. Every methodology included will suffer to a greater or lesser extent from the ability to make adequate contact with respondents from Non English Speaking Backgrounds (NESB). In general, those methodologies which involve written responses more easily lend themselves to coping with people from NESB by referring respondents to appropriate translators (e.g. the Telephone Interpreter Service) through the use of text printed in their native language referring them to the relevant telephone numbers and translators.

The cost of having a number of community language interpreters on hand to translate an interview, at each correctional centre would be prohibitive.

Any methodology would also suffer from a lack of population distribution statistics from which to judge the appropriateness of any given response. That is, no matter which methodology was adopted there would be difficulties in knowing whether the sample was truly representative or not.

An almost hidden imperative of such a visitors survey is that in practical terms what is actually being sought by such a survey is not a general philosophical finding relating to visiting per se by the visitors. Rather what is being sought are specified feelings regarding specific institutions that the person has visited. However, these specific feelings/responses are intrinsically linked to the individuals' experience with the criminal justice system as a whole. Prising apart specific feelings from the general reaction an individual may have to imprisonment as a whole only adds more confounding layers onto an area of research where there are no easy answers.

A section in the appendix provides a breakdown of the strengths and weaknesses incorporated into the five research methodologies identified for possible use in a visitors survey.

Selected Methodology

It was agreed by all parties that the most appropriate methodology for this survey would be self-administered questionnaire to be mailed out to the home address contained on the Department's computer. There were problems associated with this selected methodology and some privacy concerns. This process could be refined for future endeavours through the distribution of a letter/leaflet or display at the visiting centres alerting people to the proposed survey.

A package consisting of the questionnaire, a reply paid envelope and a covering letter from both Justice Action and CRC Justice Support was mailed to visitors whose contact details were contained on the Department's visitor database (See Appendix for examples). In order to ensure that an adequate response rate was achieved, the mailing addresses for those who visited a New South Wales Correctional Centre in the month of September, 1994 were down-loaded from the Department's computer database and translated into address labels by a commercial mailing house. A total of 5303 usable addresses were obtained and the mail out of materials was undertaken in the second week of October, 1994.

All New South Wales Correctional centres were included as part of the selection process. The anonymity of respondents was attempted to be maintained by not requiring the recording of the name of the respondent on the form and not providing a complete breakdown of responses whereby an individual could be identified in the data.

The self-completion questionnaire (See Appendix) finally despatched was basically that already developed by Justice Action in conjunction with CRC Justice Support with only minor additions. The twenty-one questions incorporated a range of questions that are commonly identified in the literature. The questionnaire printed as a 4 page booklet folded from A3 paper, contained a watermark saying "have your say" in an attempt to provoke a full and candid response. The number of questions asked was deliberately kept as small as possible not only to fit the booklet, but to encourage a response of one kind or another. The typeface and set-out were chosen to be as large and readable as possible. A number of open-ended questions were interspersed between closed questions in order to encourage the respondent to feel free to comment, in their own words, on what they felt was appropriate and important to them. Each questionnaire was tailored by having the name of the Correctional Centre to which the visitor last visited printed at the top of the questionnaire. The written instructions was "Please answer the following questions in terms of your experience at: (Gaol Name)".

RESULTS

Response Rate

As stated previously, 5303 packages containing the questionnaire were mailed to visitors selected from the Department's database. A total of 1170 useable questionnaires were returned to the Department - an overall response rate of 23.6%. The response rate from each correctional centre varied between 10% and 63.8% (see table in appendix). The range of responses for the larger correctional centres (100 + visitors) was 17.8% (at Mulawa) to 38.9% (at Berrima). These extremes are quite telling in their own right and serve to show that there are obviously many hidden factors behind the rate of the visitation to the inmates, apart from the cost, distance and cohesion arguments in the literature debated in the introduction and background chapters of this report. Mulawa Correctional Centre at the time of the survey, held around 70% of the state's *female* inmate population. Berrima Correctional Centre has had a long history of separately housing the state's male protection inmates, e.g. convicted police and other notable figures who would be "at risk" in the general inmate population.

Profile of respondents

- 73% of the visitors were female.
- The visitors ages ranged from 2 years to 87 years, with 50% being aged less than 38 years (see Figure 1).
- 76% of the visitors had been born in Australia.
- Around 6% of the visitors considered themselves to be Australian Aborigines or Torres Strait Islanders. There was no significant difference in the number of visitors who were of Aboriginal or TSI descent to city or country correctional centres ($X^2 = 5.877$, $df = 2$, $po = 0.05$).

Table 1: Age of youngest child directly cared for

	%
Under 2	22
2 - 4	30
5 - 6	9
7 - 8	8
9 - 10	8
11 - 13	10
14 +	13

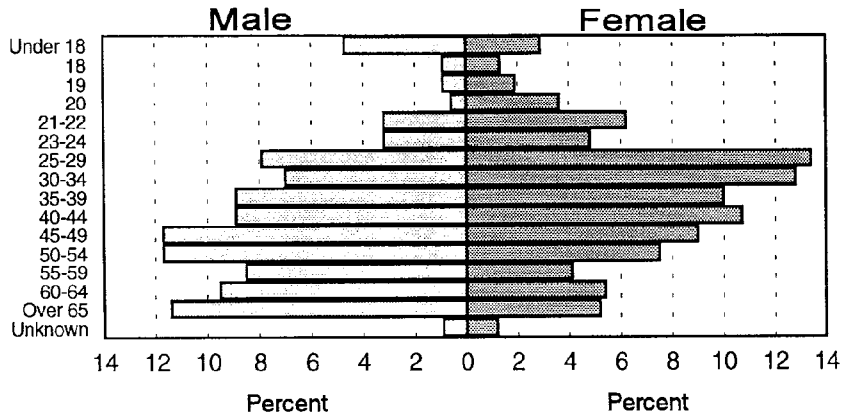
- Only 41% of visitors were directly caring for children:

42% of these had one child,

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- 35% of these had two children,
- 22% had their youngest child aged under 2 years,
- over 50% had their youngest child aged less than 4 years old,
- 50% also had their oldest child aged less than 10 years old.

Figure 1: Visitor age distribution by gender



Relationship to Inmate

Although the vast majority of the relationships of the visitors were captured in the six printed categories given, it should surprise no-one that there were over 40 relationships written in by the respondents. Ranging from "In-Laws" to uncles, nephews, cousins to the ubiquitous "housemate", there were as many different relationships as would seem possible. In answer to "relationship of inmate" the main categories of response given were:

Table2: Relationship of inmate to visitor

	(n)	%
Husband/de facto	254	21.7
Wife/de facto	14	1.2
Boyfriend/Girlfriend	83	7.1
Brother/Sister	143	12.2
Son/Daughter	331	28.3
Friend	140	12.0
Other	205	17.5
TOTAL	1170	100.0

In searching the literature, it became apparent that the work of Schafer (1994) in his exploratory survey of visitors to two men's prisons in America had found significant differences in the relationship of the visitors to prisoners to that previously described in the literature. Schafer (1994) found it useful to devise 5 categories of visitors : wives, parents, siblings and "female friends" and others. The characteristics found by this study are compared to Schafer's (1994) study in Table 3. To make this study's results comparable, categories were combined to match Schafer, e.g. friends - "boyfriend", "friend", "fiancee", "lover", "ex-boyfriend", "my significant other".

Table 3: Comparison of relationship groupings

	Schafer (1994)		This Study	
	(n)	%	(n)	%
Wives	61	16.8	254	21.7
Parents	82	22.5	331	28.3
Siblings	50	13.7	143	12.2
Female Friend	130	35.7	82	7.0
Male Friend	15	4.1	64	5.5
Other	26	7.1	296	25.3
TOTAL	364	100.0	1170	100.0

It would appear that the data for New South Wales are significantly different to that found by Schafer (1994) in America ($X^2 = 217.36$, $df = 5$, $p < 0.001$). An obvious conclusion to make is that with “de-facto” status under the law in New South Wales equating to marriage, and no such law operating in America, a good percentage of the “female friend” found by Schafer (1994) could equate with the de-facto provisions operating in New South Wales and so really be “wives” in this instance. It would also appear that parents are slightly more likely to visit in New South Wales than in America. This difference remains even when the responses made by those who visited female correctional centres (n=57) were removed from analysis.

In terms of New South Wales Inmate Census for 30 June, 1995 (Eyland, 1995) around 35% of the male inmate population stated they were married or in a de-facto relationship on entry into gaol. This is consistent with the results of this study with the percentage of those who had wives visiting being closer to this census figure than that found by Schafer (1994).

Motivation for the visit

Eight forced choice responses were supplied in answer to the question “When you visit this prisoner, how often is it because...” each of which had a 5 point scale ranging from “never” to “always”. There appeared to be some reluctance on behalf of the respondents to answer the question asking did they visit because “the prisoner has requested it”, with 38% refusing to answer. Of those who did answer (n=723), around one quarter stated that they *never* visited because “the prisoner has requested it”. Opposed to this nearly one third reported that this same reason was why they *always* visited.

Around 63% of visitors asserted that they always visited in order to “stay in touch/maintain relationship” with the inmate. There were a high percentage who didn’t answer in terms of the response “companionship” - 41% - yet over one third of those who did reply said they always visited for companionship. Business matters didn’t seem to be a relevant response either with just over 50% refusing to respond. In fact “discuss family matters/problems”, “discuss prisoner’s problems” and a “discuss my personal problems” all recorded high rates of missing responses (38%-46%). One positive response was in the area of trying to “keep the family together/children” where 48% replied that this was always why they visited.

Other written responses to this question were:

- Care for/love the inmate (n=42);
- to offer support (n=32);
- inmates only chance to see his children (n=8) and
- miss the inmate (n=6).

How do you usually travel?

The response to this question on how visitors transport themselves to the correctional centres was very good with no missing responses. Around 70% said they either drove their own car, rode a bike or walked to the centre. 6% said they got a lift with their friends with a further 10% using public transport. Only 17 individuals reported using the services of the CRC bus. Another

substantial category contained 32 people (2.7%) who wrote that they got a lift with their family in the space provided on the questionnaire.

A chi-square analysis which divided the correctional centres into two groups - city and country - revealed a significant difference in the way visitors transported themselves to their visit. Visitors to country correctional centres tended to use public transport less preferring to get a lift with friends or using the CRC bus ($X^2 = 72.64$, $df = 6$, $p < 0.01$).

How long did travelling take?

The range of responses to this question was very large, spanning from a quick 5 minutes to an arduous 24 hours. In aggregate, 50% of the visitors took less than 75 minutes to complete their trip one way. Included in this time frame, around 12% took one hour and a further 10% took only 30 minutes to travel, one way, to the centre. In general accordance with these results, the British Home Office (1993) reporting on the National Prison Survey conducted in 1991 reported that 23% of visitors had had to spend at least 2 ½ hours or more travelling time to visit a gaol compared to around 26% for this study.

An independent samples T-Test resulted in a significant difference being found in the average travelling times experienced by visitors to country correctional centres ($\bar{x} = 144.87$ minutes) compared to city visitors ($\bar{x} = 85.49$ minutes); ($t = -7.45$, $df = 1168$, $p < .001$).

How long were the visits?

In answer to the question "on average, how long are your visits?", some 50% spent up to and including 2 ½ hours a visit. 19% spent around 2 hours, 8% spent around 1 ½ hours and 13% spent at least 1 hour at an average visit.

An independent samples T-Test showed significant difference in the average length of the visit conducted in country correctional centres ($\bar{x} = 229.25$ minutes) compared to those in the city ($\bar{x} = 154.34$ minutes); ($t = -9.97$, $df = 1168$, $p < 0.001$).

Do you usually arrive before scheduled visiting hours?

This question was specifically included as there had been complaints made to the Department about having to arrive early just to gain entry to a visit. 70% of the visitors reported that they did not usually arrive before the visit areas opened. Of those who did arrive early the main reasons given were to:

- Get the maximum visiting time (n=64);
- allow for processing (n=31);
- avoid being late (n=26) and
- get a good seat/table (n=21).

There was no significant difference between those visiting country and city correctional centres as to whether they usually arrived before scheduled visiting hours ($X^2 = 6.56$, $df = 2$, $p = 0.038$).

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In a related question, some 80% of those who responded (n=335) with regard to how early they arrived before scheduled visiting hours said they typically spent 30 minutes or less waiting for the centre to open. However, three individuals reported that they had arrived some 3 hours before opening time.

How long would you usually wait?

In response to the question “once visiting hours have started, how long would you usually wait for your visit?” 67 people failed to provide an answer. Around 4% said that they didn’t have to wait at all. 30% started their visit within 10 minutes, 47% had started their visit within 15 minutes with around 61% had to waiting up to 20 minutes for their visit to start.

Obviously waiting times for visits will vary quite widely from centre to centre and from day to day at the same correctional centre. The range of responses received reflected this, going from a low of not having to wait at all to a mammoth waiting time of 4 hours for one individual.

An independent samples T-Test comparing waiting times at country centres to city correctional centres showed no significant difference. (t=.60, df = 1168, p = 0.61).

How often do you visit?

In response to the questions “on average, how often do you visit this prisoner in gaol” the following responses were received:

Table 4: How often visits occur

	(n)	%
Two or three times a week	266	23
Once a week	351	30
Two or three times a month	230	20
Once a month	230	20
Once or twice a year	74	6
Less than once a year	8	1
TOTAL	1159	100

These results show that over 50% of visitors were visiting at least once a week with a further 20% visiting at least every fortnight.

A chi-square analysis comparing the visiting frequency of those who visited country correctional centres to those in the city demonstrated that the country visitors tended to visit less often. ($X^2 = 61.06$, df = 4, p < 0.01).

How long have you been visiting this prisoner?

There was a huge range of responses for this question which spanned from one week to 18 years. Around 50% had been visiting the prisoner for less than 40 weeks including 10% who had been visiting for around 13 weeks - the most common period reported.

Do you bring children to the visits?

52% percent of visitors replied that they brought children with them when they visited the correctional centre.

In a related question, the survey asked the visitors to rate how they felt concerning the facilities provided for children within the gaol on a 5 point scale ranging from excellent to non-existent. 175 visitors did not provide a response to this question (15%); of these 175, some 152 stated that they were not directly caring for any children.

Table 5 provides a comparison of the ratings made with regard to facilities available to children in the correctional centres based on whether or not the visitors actually brought children along to the visit.

Table 5: Facilities in gaol for children by presence of children

Facilities for children in gaol	Does bring children		Does not bring children		TOTAL	
	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%
Excellent	19	3.1	15	3.9	34	3.4
Good	97	15.9	65	16.9	162	16.3
Fair	161	26.4	115	29.9	276	27.8
Poor	176	28.9	120	31.3	296	29.8
Non-existent	156	25.6	69	18	227	22.7
TOTAL	609	61.3	384	38.7	995	100

It is hard to know whether to treat the responses of those who do bring children to the visit separately to those who do not bring children to the visit, with regard to their respective views on the adequacy of facilities provided for children in the visiting areas. It could be argued that a person can judge children's facilities whether or not they actually bring a child along. Certainly even though they themselves may not bring a child they will be affected in their visit by those who do.

In any case, a chi-square performed on the data shows no significant differences in how those who do bring children versus those who do not bring them to a visit rated the facilities available for children. ($X^2 = 8.13$, $df = 4$, $P > 7.05$)

Another chi-square analysis comparing visitors to country and city correctional centres revealed that those visiting city correctional centres were more likely to state facilities for children when visiting were “non-existent” than their counterparts visiting the country centres, and that the country visitors were more likely to say they were “excellent” or “good”. ($X^2 = 54.61$, $df = 5$, $p < 0.01$).

There was no significant difference between country and city visitors as to whether they were directly caring for any children. ($X^2 = 1.78$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.410$).

An analysis of responses to the questions “Do you bring children to the visits” and “Are you directly caring for any children” produced the following results:

**Table 6: Directly caring for children and whether brought to visit.
Are you directly caring for children?**

Children brought to visit	Yes	No	Total
Yes	41 (251.4)	199 (358.6)	610 53%
No	63 (222.6)	477 (317.4)	540 47%
Total	474 41.2%	676 58.8%	1150 100%

(Expected value)

The data show a significant difference ($X^2 = 366.92$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.001$). The majority of those who do not bring children to visits also do not directly care for children in the community. Those that do have children tend to bring them to the visit. It is interesting to note that there are numbers of visitors who are not directly caring for children who bring children along to the visit. The characteristics of those visitors who bring children to visits but are not their carer are as shown below:

Table 7: Visitors who bring children to visits but are not their carers
Relationship to inmate

Gender of visitor	Partners	Parents	Siblings	Friends	Others	Total
Male	1 (4.2)	30 (30.5)	7 (6.6)	4 (5.1)	18 (13.6)	60 30.2 %
Female	13 (9.8)	71 (70.5)	15 (15.4)	13 (11.9)	27 (31.4)	139 69.8 %
Total	14 7.0 %	101 50.8 %	22 11.1 %	17 8.5 %	45 22.6 %	199 100%

(Expected value)

A chi-square result shows no significant difference between the relationships of the visitor to the inmate and visitors' gender ($X^2 = 5.98$, $df = 4$ $p > 0.01$).

This table shows that one half of those who bring children to a visit even though they do not directly care for them are the parents of the *inmates* - presumably the majority are bringing their grand children along on their visit to their son or daughter. The vast majority (n=186) of these 199 visitors were in fact visiting male inmates with the majority (n=139) being female visitors.

Comments on the visiting area

A good response rate was achieved for these items, with only two areas receiving substantial missing scores - disabled access (26%) and canteen/cafeteria (15%). It may be that people are unwilling to comment on facilities for disabled persons as they have had no experience with the kind of judgements that would need to be made. However, as the high response (58%) for "non existent canteen/cafeteria" illustrates, these facilities are in fact few in number around the state which has perhaps confused some into not providing an answer at all.

For the majority of items listed, respondents have provided ratings of between excellent to fair in the following proportions.

Table 8: Ratings of between excellent to fair for facilities

	<i>%</i>
Toilets	71
Lockers	76
Furniture	78
Lighting	90
Temperature	74
Space	66
Waiting Area	65
Drink/Food Machine	70
Tea/Coffee Facilities	58

Of these the highest percentage rated as only “fair” for any item was furniture at 44%.

Written comments were also received saying “the waiting area was too crowded” (n=19), there was “nothing for the children to do, need more toys” (n=16), there was a “need for more outdoor covered areas” (n=18), “when it rains there is not enough shelter” (n=10) and “tea and coffee facilities were not up to standard” (n=10).

Problems when visiting

The following table shows the distribution of responses received in relation to the question “Are these a problem for you when visiting ?”

Table 9: Problems when visiting

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Always	Missing
	%	%	%	%	%
Waiting time at goal	13	21	37	10	3
Distance travelled	23	13	21	27	6
Treatment by officers	39	25	22	4	5
Limited visiting hours days	28	14	21	19	7
Child care in the community	44	6	4	8	33
Facilities for children (in gaol)	29	7	12	19	25
Lack of information	23	17	25	14	10
Cost of visiting	30	12	16	25	9
Security checks	45	17	18	9	8

Two areas that always caused problems for around one quarter of visitors were the distance to be travelled and the cost of visiting. As was done previously, it was thought prudent to check whether those commenting on facilities for children, in this case in the community, actually take children in with them on visits to see if there were any significant differences. This was especially the case as 2/3 of those who did respond replied that this was never a problem when they visited.

Table 10: Child care by child accompaniment

Child care in the community is a problem....	Does bring children		Does not bring Children		TOTAL	
	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%
Never	271	57	239	79	510	66
Rarely	52	11	19	6	71	9
Sometimes	48	1	16	5	64	8
Often	35	7	8	3	43	6
Always	70	5	20	7	90	12
TOTAL	476	61	302	39	778	100

Excluding missing values there is a significant difference in the distribution of responses to attitudes to child care in the community between those who actually bring children in for visits compared to those who do not ($X^2=41.22$, $df = 4$, $P<.001$).

It is particularly interesting to note that 79% of those who don't bring children in whilst visiting also never have a problem with child care in the community. Presumably most of those who do bring children to a visit (57%) don't have problems with child care in the community as the child is coming to the visit.

Likewise for those concerned about child care facilities available in the correctional centre, the following table provides the responses received.

Table 11: Child care in correctional centre by child accompaniment

Facilities for children in gaol is a problem....	Does bring children		Does not bring children		TOTAL	
	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%
Never	137	25	195	60	332	38
Rarely	55	10	27	8	82	9
Sometimes	108	20	27	8	135	15
Often	77	14	29	9	106	12
Always	174	31	49	15	223	25
TOTAL	551	100	327	100	878	100

Again there is a significant difference in response between those who do or do not bring a child on a correctional centre visit in terms of the perception of what the facilities for children are like in correctional centres ($X^2 = 110.11$, $df = 4$, $P < .001$).

Presumably there is never a problem with facilities for children in the correctional centre setting for those who do not bring children along because they do not bring children in the first place. Around 45% of those who do bring children to the visit found the facilities available for during the visit were often or always a problem.

Other comments in regard to problems experienced when visiting gaol included:

- Unhelpful Officers (n=15);
- lack of privacy (n=9);
- uncontrolled children (n=7) and
- not allowed to take nappy/bottle in (n=5).

Why visiting times are not suitable

Of the 353 who responded to this open-ended question concerning their perception of how convenient the official visiting times were, 16% believed that visiting times through the week were more convenient. In fact, another 17% actually stated that weekend visiting is a big problem due to work, transport or other family commitments. Yet, in opposition to this position, around 8%

replied that weekday visiting hours are unsuitable for visitors who have to work during the week. One solution offered by 13% of those who answered was that visiting should be available 7 days a week at all correctional centres.

The inconvenience in having to travel to the centres was at the heart of some responses with 10% replying that the distance was too far to travel to fit a visit in on a day combined with 11% saying that it was very difficult to find time to visit as other commitments centring on employment and other family concerns make it hard to visit at any time. 3% complained in general about availability of transport.

Other problems involved those with children with 3% complaining that the children's normal routine was at odds with the official visiting times. Three visitors complained that they couldn't afford a babysitter and couldn't afford to take the children with them; 2 said that because visiting with children could only occur outside school hours then that reduced their "quality" time with the inmate, with 1 respondent preferring not to take children in the gaol environment at all. This combined with other issues concerning child care made visiting very difficult in several visitors' minds.

Information concerning visiting rights and conditions

The question "Has information provided by the Department about visiting rights and conditions been...." certainly elicited a high response rate with only 8 visitors declining an answer. The response obtained to the question was as follows:

Table 12: Provision of information by the Department

	(n)	%
Excellent	81	7
Good	412	35
Fair	332	29
Poor	162	14
Non-existent	175	15
TOTAL	1162	100

A chi-square analysis comparing visitors to country and city correctional centres found no significant difference in their response to this question. ($X^2 = 14.72$, $df = 5$, $p = 0.02$).

With 29% of visitors replying that the level of information provided by the Department was poor or non-existent there is obviously some room for improvement. As Schafer (1989) pointed out in his review of American prisons, there is a specific need to make visiting rules widely available to all concerned.

Additional written comments on visiting rights and conditions were made by 206 respondents. 15% stated that no information had been automatically given and that it was only given when a visitor asked for it. Another 7% said that the only information that was supplied was by the inmate. In fact, another 7% felt that they were in fact given the wrong advice when they asked the officers. A further 6% complained of a crucial lack of information for first time visitors.

Around ¼ of those who responded with written comments complained about the perceived inconsistency in applying the rules, that the rights and conditions seemed to change from day to day or from officer to officer. This perception was compounded by another 14% of the visitors complaining that there should be a booklet/pamphlet/brochure available that not only told you what can be done, but what also can't be done, so that the correct information is printed for all to see.

Are you and your family treated politely?

In response to the question “Are you and your family treated politely by DCS staff when you visit?” The following response was received:

Table 13: Are you treated politely by staff

	(n)	%
Always	516	44
Often	333	29
Sometimes	218	19
Rarely	57	5
Never	35	3
TOTAL	1159	100

There was a significant difference found in the responses given to this question by those visiting country and city correctional centres. Those visiting the country centres were more likely to say that DOCS staff had “always” been polite and less likely to say they were “never” polite. ($X^2 = 31.58$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.01$).

Are there any barriers to visiting?

With less than 3% not replying to the question “Are there any barriers to you visiting more frequently?” more visitors responded no, there were no barriers to visiting more frequently (56%) than those who replied yes, there were barriers (44%).

However, a significant number of visitors to country correctional centres were more likely to say that there were barriers to their more frequent visiting. ($X^2 31.58$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.01$). These country visitors were more likely to cite either cost or distance and travelling as barriers to their visiting more often.

These results are in line with those found by Fuller (1993) in her study of visitors to women's prisons in California. She found that 22 cited costs, 14% distance and transportation issues and 14% had work commitments that were all seen to be barriers to family and friends visiting.

How many inmates visited?

The question asked was "How many prisoners have you visited in the last month? (not just in this gaol)". 73% had visited only one inmate in the last month with around another 7% having visited two inmates in the last month.

Analysis by gender of inmate visited

As has been shown in the 1995 NSW Inmate Census, Eyland (1995), the vast majority of inmates in full-time custody at any one time are male : 6070 males (95.1%) versus 314 females (4.9%). The gender mix of inmates visited by respondents to the questionnaire exactly matched this proportion : 1113 males (95.1%) versus 57 females (4.9%).

As the overall preponderance of responses were for male inmates visited, the overall results obtained closely match that for the males. What was of interest then was to conduct a separate analysis of certain key variables in order to compare the results to see whether there were any differences between those visiting female inmates and those visiting males inmates.

These twenty key variables include :

- Visitor's gender
- Visitor's aboriginality
- Visitors' Relationship to inmate
 - "How do you usually travel to the centre?"
 - "Do you usually arrive before visiting hours?"
 - "How often do you visit?"
 - "Do you bring children to the visits?"
 - "(Rating of) Information provided by D.C.S about visiting rights?"
 - "(Rating of) treated politely by D.C.S. staff?"
 - "Are there any barriers to you visiting more frequently?"
 - "Are your directly caring for any children?"

And ratings for how often they visit (motivations) because -

- Prisoner requested it
- Stay in touch
- companionship
- business matters
- discuss family problems
- discuss prisoners problems
- discuss my personal problems
- keep family together.

When the responses of those visitors who visited male inmates were compared to those given by those who visited female inmates, a chi-square analysis of the twenty key variables identified above revealed only two areas where there was a significant difference: the relationship of the visitor to the inmate and the gender of the visitor.

The data reveal that male inmates tend to be visited by their parents compared to female inmates who were visited by their parents at half the expected rate. ($X^2 = 14.04$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.01$). The female inmates' visitors relationships tended to be more removed, for example; cousins and "in-laws". Female inmates were visited by their partners at a similar rate to the male inmates. In terms of gender of the visitor, significantly more female visitors visited male inmates with significantly more male inmates visiting female inmates. ($X^2 = 12.65$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.01$).

Gender of visitors

As already said in the profile section, 27% of the visitors who responded were male - 316 respondents.

A significant difference ($X^2 = 104.84$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.001$) centred around "partners", with the female visitor being more likely to be the partner of the inmate than male visitor. The male visitor to female inmates was more likely to be a parent or a sibling to the inmate than any other category.

Further analysis as to who these visitors actually visited in terms of the gender of the inmate and the stated relationship between the two is summarised in table 14 below:

Separate Chi-Squares analyses for the two categories of male and female inmates visited based on the above figures reveal a significant difference within each in terms of the relationship of the visitor. However, "Partners" as a category which includes "wife" or "husband" as a descriptor only serves to confuse the issue. It would be a brave individual female visitor who stated she was the "wife" of the female inmate she was visiting and similarly so for a male visitor to say he was the "husband" of a male inmate. It is more likely that these type of close relationships would be included in either the "friend" or "other" categories. If the category of "partner" is removed from the analysis for both the male and female inmates visited there is no significant difference found between the type of relationship and the gender of the visitor.

Table 14: Gender of visitor and inmate relationships

Relationship to inmate	Female Inmates			Male Inmates		
	Male Visitors	Female Visitors	Total	Male Visitors	Female Visitors	Total
Partners	9	0	9 (15.9%)	0	259	259 (23.3%)
Parents	3	5	8 (14.0%)	105	218	323 (29.0%)
Siblings	2	9	11 (19.3%)	51	81	132 (11.9%)
Friend	6	6	12 (21.1%)	62	156	218 (19.6%)
Other	7	10	17 (29.8%)	71	110	181 (16.3%)
TOTAL	27 (47%)	30 (53%)	57 (100%)	289 (26%)	824 (74%)	1113 (100%)

What has sometimes been asserted is that as the vast majority of inmates are male, the majority of visitors to correctional centres are female. This survey found this to be the case with 73% of all visitors responding being female.

A conclusion that, while in overall numbers males do not visit correctional centres, males specifically do not visit female inmates can not be sustained from the data. As Table 14 shows, while the number of visitors to female inmates is lower overall, the proportions of male visitors to female inmates (47%) is not very different to the proportion of female visitors to female inmates (53%). In fact as stated previously, a chi-square analysis comparing the gender of the visitor to the gender of the inmate reveals there is a significant difference - but it is really females visitors not visiting female inmates that is causing this difference ($X^2 = 12.65$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.001$) rather than males not visiting (in proportion to total numbers).

A chi-square analysis involving the other twenty key variables revealed that there were significant differences in responses to nine questions based on the gender of the visitor.

Male visitors:

- tended to use their own car more than the female visitors ($X^2 = 23.19$, $df = 6$ $p < 0.01$);
- they were also less likely to visit at least once a week ($X^2 = 61.50$, $df = 6$, $p < 0.01$);

- were less likely to be directly caring for children, ($X^2 = 45.24$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.01$);
- brought children to the visit less often ($X^2 = 38.04$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.01$) and
- more likely to rate the facilities available for children on a visit as “good” or “fair” than the female visitors who were more likely to say they were “non-existent” ($X^2 = 36.04$, $df = 8$, $p < 0.01$).

The women visitors were more likely to always visit in order to “stay in touch” ($x^2 = 18.29$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.01$), for “companionship” ($x^2 = 30.58$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.01$), to “discuss (the visitors) personal problems” ($x^2 = 41.64$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.01$) and to “keep the family together” ($x^2 = 18.67$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.01$).

There was no significant difference in the gender of the visitor between those who visited country correctional centres and those who visited the city correctional centres. ($x^2 = 1.19$, $df = 2$, $p = 0.55$).

Aboriginality

About 6% of the visitors reported they were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.

In terms of the relationship of the inmate to the visitor, there was no significant difference between those visitors who stated they were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent. ($X^2 = 12.18$, $df = 4$, $p > 0.01$).

A chi-square analysis did reveal significant differences for four of the twenty key variables in terms of the visitors’ aboriginality. Visitors of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent were:

- More likely to travel to the visit by public transport ($X^2 = 17.52$, $df = 6$, $p < 0.01$);
- more often directly caring for children ($X^2 = 19.83$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.01$);
- more likely to bring children to a visit ($X^2 = 10.01$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.01$) and
- they were also less likely to say they were “often” treated politely by DOCS staff ($X^2 = 20.03$, $df = 5$, $p < 0.01$).

Written Comments

The visitors were invited to make further written suggestions or comments about the visiting facilities at the correctional centres they had visited. In all, 753 visitors (64%) took the opportunity to make written comments.

These comments were collated and subject to a content analysis grouped by correctional centre. The resultant grouped comments were forwarded to the relevant Governors and Regional Commanders for their information and action.

Specific comments which add more information to the data obtained from the closed ended questions are incorporated in the discussion chapter.

In general the surveys returned were nearly always fully completed with many comments and suggestions made for individual correctional centres leading to a very involved analysis. As a brief summary the following comments were commonly stated:

- More must be done for the children (e.g., play areas, toys, videos, appropriate food and drinks able to be bought, and baby formula warming facilities).
- More attention must be paid to the areas where visitors are required to wait for their visit (many correctional centres simply have people wait in the open making them subject to the extremes of the weather).
- The areas provided for visits are invariably seen to be too small for the number of visitors wanting to have visits (lack of privacy and discomfort, limited visit duration due to overcrowding).
- In some centres (e.g., Parramatta) there was a call to use more outside areas/courtyards so that noisy children would not could cause problems.
- There would appear to be some perceived inconsistencies in regard to what officers allow to be taken into visits (e.g., handbags, unopened cigarette packets, lollies, drink cartons etc).
- It was reported that tea/coffee facilities are not generally available.
- Toilets were not available in some visits areas (e.g., Parramatta, Remand) causing the visit to be terminated if a young one (or even an old one) had to go to the toilet.
- Several respondents (Silverwater) complained of sexual acts being performed in front of children by those visiting inmates.
- Travelling long distances for some represented huge costs and great inconvenience (calls for a CRC Justice Support bus to travel from Newcastle).
- Some visitors reported that they felt like they were being treated like inmates by staff - although there were also many compliments on staff behaviour.
- There were many complaints of long delays in waiting to see an inmate or of even waiting in vain for a visit only to be told the inmate was not available.
- The less than optimum physical conditions of visiting areas reported often reflect the old age of certain centres (e.g., certain centres at Long Bay, Parramatta).
- There was a call for the opportunity to purchase more wholesome food than that generally available from the vending machines (sandwiches, fruit).

DISCUSSION

As has already been established in earlier chapters of this report, there is a very real need to examine the views of those individuals who find themselves in the position of having to visit a friend or family member who has been imprisoned. It is apparent that in order to make sense of what is happening in visiting a correctional centre we can no longer afford to let penological research stop at the gate. The reasons inmates are inside are all on the outside. They invariably escape because of what's happening on the outside (see Thompson (1992)). They often commit acts of self harm and despair because of what is happening outside - amplified by the correctional centre surroundings. The primary link between inside and outside is the correctional centre visitor. These individuals are a key to understanding what is happening with the inmate. It would appear that these people are also willing to inform the authorities of what they think about this process given the opportunity. Although there were problems associated with adopting a self-completion mail-out survey of these visitors, these problems were considered to be less than those associated with either face to face encounters or even telephone survey techniques. That over 1,100 fully completed questionnaires were returned is testament to a need by these visitors to tell someone in authority their feelings on having to visit a correctional centre. This was confirmed by around 500 of these visitors taking the time to record written comments on what they thought could be done to make any improvements on what they had been experiencing.

What was particularly surprising was that it is to be generally expected that those individuals who take time to respond to a questionnaire about service provision tend to be those who have the most to complain. As developed further in this chapter, this was not the case with the results for this survey.

Response rate

Although it has been claimed by Babbie (1990:182) and Dillman (1978:21) that a response rate of 50% is adequate for a mail out questionnaire, the two most important techniques designed to improve response rates, follow-up and the use of monetary incentives, could not be used in this study for privacy and community reaction reasons.

It is likely that a major contributor to the 23% response rate was the difficulties associated with the recording of visitor addresses on the Department's database. It became apparent that inadequate mailing addresses were a significant factor affecting this response. Although identification is required by a visitor before they are included on the database, it was established at the mail-out stage of the project that many false and misleading addresses were contained on the database.

As over 1100 questionnaires were received, and as the response rate of each correctional centre, especially the larger centres, was not dissimilar to the overall response rate, it would be safe to treat the responses as a whole. It is to be regretted that there were not enough responses to provide an institution by institution answer to the questions raised. However, the overall results gained are an important system-wide indicator of what visitors think of visiting conditions in New South Wales Correctional Centres.

Who visits

The situation found by this study with regard to who visits those incarcerated in New South Wales Correctional Centres is roughly consistent with the demographic characteristics of the inmate population of New South Wales. That is, a good proportion of male inmates are visited by their wives (21%) with the number at census (Eyland, (1995)) who said they were married being 35%. The largest category of visitors was parents (28%). Comparisons to other countries and jurisdictions are hard to make as either legal differences (e.g. "Common law" statutes) or published data do not make such comparisons possible. This is curious in one sense as comparative data with America provided by Schafer (1994) showed that the frequency of visiting was very similar. Both this study and Schafer found that 53% of visitors were visiting at least once a week. Results from the United Kingdom were not comparable as the survey published by the Home Office was conducted with inmates rather than visitors.

This is a very clear picture then, over half of the visitors to New South Wales Correctional Centres who participated in the study are visiting at a minimum of once a week, with the vast majority of inmates being visited by either their wife or parent.

As to why the visitors did visit, there appears to be several very clear and popular reasons why the visit took place. With 63% stating that they always visited to stay in touch or maintain their relationship and 48% saying they always visited to keep the family together and let any children visit their parent, the linkage to "family" was quite strong. Certainly business matters did not rate highly with 31% saying they never visited because of them, and 50% not even bothering to answer the questions at all. There appeared to be some ambivalence expressed regarding motivations for visiting especially when the inmate requested a visit themselves with 15% of visitors saying they never did this as opposed to 19% who said they always visited because the inmate requested it.

There were 6 distinct areas of concern that were both identified by the visitors themselves and/or were included in the literature. These areas were:

- The provision of information;
- the care of children;
- transportation issues;
- facilities provided in the visiting areas;
- visiting hours and
- treatment by staff.

Provision of Information

As discussed in the chapter of this report entitled *A Wider Social Context* a great deal of difficulty is often experienced by the families of those incarcerated concerning the provision of information about their family members. It has been argued that this perceived lack of flow of information not only affects the family members confrontations with the police and the courts, there is also a lack of information available concerning the families' visiting rights and conditions to correctional centres. As Schwartz and Weintraub (1974:24) found in their epic study of the prisoner's wife:

“We found that most immediate requests by clients were for two types of specific information..... the most common request being information about prison visits; the second consisted of questions about how to get specific services”.

It is clear in the literature dealing with visitors to correctional centres, that the provision of information to visitors, whether it be in terms of the rules relating to visiting, the hours visits are allowed or even just general information about the inmate, has always arisen as a major problem that never seems to be adequately addressed. As Jorgensen, Hernandez and Warren (1986:48) see it “families (of inmates) experience a consummate lack of accurate information accompanied by a plethora of information that is confusing and in some cases, unintelligible”. That this can sometimes be a crucial lack of information has been seen by Schwartz and Weintraub (1974) to enter almost “Kafkaesque” proportions with families of inmates not getting enough information to enable them to interpret whether they are even entitled to enough information to know what is going on.

In an later work, Weintraub (1976:28) stresses that :

“four specific crisis points have been identified for the family of an individual passing through the criminal justice system. They are arrest, and arraignment, sentencing, initial incarceration and immediate pre/post release”.

She repeats that at these four points the most major need is for the family to receive adequate information. In New South Wales, virtually all four of these crisis points have Departmental staff involved as the Department moves to assume total control of New South Wales court security.

As already stated in the results section of this report, the question asking for a rating on the information provided by the Department about visiting rights and conditions elicited a high response rate with only eight people declining to answer. In total with some 29% replying that the information supplied was either poor or non-existent, and with a further 29% saying that it was only fair, there is a specific message being sent that the provision of information to visitors needs to be re-assessed and new provisions made. In keeping with the interest taken in this question by the visitors, additional written comments on visiting rights and conditions were made by 206 visitors-18% of all visitors. 15% stated that no information had been automatically provided and that it was only given when a visitor asked for it. Another 7% said that the only information that was supplied was that provided by the inmate. In fact, another 7% felt that they were actually given the wrong advice by the officers when they asked them. A further 6% complained of a crucial lack of information for those inmates and visitors alike who were in custody for the *first* time.

Around ¼ of those who responded with written comments complained about the perceived inconsistency in applying the rules, that the rights and conditions seemed to change from day to day or officer to officer. This perception was compounded by another 14% of the visitors complaining that there should be a booklet/pamphlet/brochure available that not only told you what can be done, but also what cannot be done (or cannot be brought in) so that the correct information is printed for all to see. As seen by a wife in this study:

“I found that when my husband was convicted and he was taken away, nobody was able to give us correct or enough information about where he would go, when we could see him, what ours or his rights and obligations were and who we should contact”.

From the results of this survey it would appear that even though the literature has highlighted a major problem with the provision of information to inmate visitor families for many years, there is still a continuing need for this to be addressed in New South Wales. This area is the subject of several practical recommendations that could be implemented.

The care of children

The provision of adequate facilities for the children of inmates was also identified by both the literature and the visitors themselves, as an area where problems constantly occur. As reported earlier, the wives of inmates who have the double burden of caring for both the inmate and any children or other family members on the outside have specific problems relating to what they should do with those children when they visit. 52% of visitors replied that they did bring children with them when they visited. In a related question asking how they felt concerning the facilities provided for children within the gaol, some 53% of all visitors said that these facilities were either poor or non-existent. With a remaining 28% saying that these facilities were only fair, there is an explicit need being voiced for something to be done in this area.

As the row totals in Table 5 show, only 47.5% of visitors rate the facilities provided for children in the correctional centres to be in the range of fair to excellent. That over half the respondents thought the facilities were poor or even non-existent is a clear indication for action to be taken.

A further analysis that compared how visitors rated the facilities available to children in gaol based on whether they actually brought children along on their visits, revealed that there was a significant difference between these two groups. Of those who do not bring children on a visit, 60% thought that there was never a problem with facilities for children in the gaol. This analysis found similar results when these groups were compared on how they rated child care facilities in the community. 60% of those who do not bring children on a visit thought that child care in the community was not a problem. It would appear that the two groups, have opposing ideas yet at least one female visitor replied that “even though I do not have children, things for kids would help!”

It is a sobering experience to compare the situation in New South Wales to those programs being offered overseas. In particular, the excellent Children Visitation Program (CVP) offered in Michigan is seemingly unobtainable, yet Jose-Kampfer (1991:133) argues that “children’s visitation programs can be put in place in prisons at almost no cost. They must, however, involve the inmates, the institution and the community”. There is obviously middle ground available on this issue with the phased implementation of certain discreet elements of the CVP being possible in almost any setting.

Whether this is true for the majority of correctional centres present in NSW which were built either in the late 19th or early 20th century is a matter for debate. What is instructional in the

approach used in CVP is that not only do the children benefit, the inmates also learn various skills through running the centre. These skills include organisational, record keeping, and conflict resolution skills. These are skills that could not be part of a normal program offered in gaol.

As one male visitor reported “the lack of facilities for children seems to be the biggest problem”. Suggestions made by one other female visitor included “kids need to be able to bring in small games etc, so they can play with their fathers”. Other suggestions centred on the need to provide changing and feeding facilities (e.g bottle warming) for babies, “a baby change room or mother’s room for feeding babies would be helpful”. There appeared to be some inconsistency surrounding the presence of extra baby bottles and nappies brought in by visitors. Although it has been alleged that a baby’s nappy is a common avenue to smuggle illegal drugs into a correctional centre, the presence of a baby change room would not only aid the visitor but would also help the correctional officer in the execution of their duty if they were required to be present for a mandatory change of nappy. If this were to be the case then the provision of disposable nappies by the Department would appear to be a workable comprise position.

Transportation

The vast majority of visitors use their own car, bike or walk to the Correctional Centres. The reluctance to use public transport (only 10% use it exclusively) may reflect the reality that correctional centres in New South Wales are not noted for being accessible by public transport. The problems of access by public transport to correctional centres are firmly connected to political constraints that mean they cannot usually be built in metropolitan areas. These are not new problems as Homer (1979) reported even the newest prisons at that time in America were built in rural areas, often at great distances from large cities. Nagel (1973) reported that in America the average distance between the 23 newest gaols, built at that time and each state’s largest city was 172 miles. This is the reality for New South Wales where the state’s largest correctional centre has been built at Junee, a country town some 450 kilometres by road from the capital, Sydney.

Travelling times spanned a large range of time from a quick 5 minutes to an extraordinary 24 hours. In aggregate, 50% of visitors took less than 75 minutes to complete their trip for a visit one way. 25% took less than 40 minutes, and 10% took 30 minutes for a one way trip. The need for transport directly to the correctional centre was called for by one make visitor who asked for “transport more regularly for people without their own and that are disabled” thus adding another dimension of difficulty in transportation. This is an area that needs further in-depth research by transport planners.

Facilities in the visiting area

In general the rating of facilities present in correctional centre visiting areas appears to have been quite positive. This is in line with the results found by Wozniak (1994) in his survey for the Scottish Prison Service who found with 62% describing the waiting facilities as comfortable or acceptable, 65% describing the toilets as clean or acceptable, 71% thinking the choice of refreshments as good or acceptable, and 88% thinking the cost of refreshments represented good or acceptable value.

The majority of ratings were in the range of “good” to “fair”. Areas of concern related to the overall space made available to visiting areas, with 30% saying the space was “poor” and around ¼ complaining that the area set aside for waiting to start a visit was “poor”. Although around 44% thought that the drink or food machines made available were “excellent” or “good”, the need for hot foods, bar-b-ques and canteens was also cited quite often by those who wrote other comments in the space provided. Allied to this, although 70% thought that tea and coffee facilities were “fair” to “excellent” there were several written comments (n=11), that complained that these facilities were not up to a standard they would wish for.

With a substantial proportion of its building stock dating back to early this century, the visiting areas in these older gaols that have been made available by the Department are inevitably at the expense of other uses. With mild climates in New South Wales, and lack of space available within the accommodation available within the correctional centres, it is not surprising that there were calls for more outdoor covered areas. One area that did not feature prominently was that of providing no smoking areas for visits. This is probably not surprising as many inmates smoke very heavily with visitors perhaps not wishing to alienate or upset inmates over this matter.

Visiting Hours

There were many contradictory results in this area with 42% of visitors reporting that “limited visiting hours or days” were “never” or “rarely” a problem for them. There was no agreement even as to whether week day visiting was appropriate with 26% of visitors saying they were unsuitable as they had to work during the week ranged against substantial numbers who saw weekend visiting a problem. These latter respondents cited the following:

- “ Visiting times through the week are more convenient” (n=55);
- “ Weekend visiting a problem - work commitments” (n=34);
- “ Weekend visiting a problem - transport” (n=4) and
- “ Weekend visiting a problem - other commitments” (n=25).

Several visitors (n=46) thought that visiting hours should be available seven days a week, with a further 45 visitors saying that there was a need for “extended hours” on any visiting day.

The balancing act of organising everyday life combined with the need to also organise regular visits to correctional centres can become nearly impossible for some visitors. This is especially the case where distance, health and children’s needs make routines almost impossible to achieve. The underlying concern in this area was the lack of flexibility in visiting times available to the correctional centre visitors. This is an area where minor changes could have a big impact and where local conditions may enable some flexibility in visiting times.

With the majority of visitors (56%) responding that there were no barriers to them visiting more frequently, the major issues that stopped the other visitors included, the distance to be travelled, the cost of visiting and work or other commitments. Some commentators have argued that the imposition of limited fixed official visiting times at least provides both a structure and a “legitimate” reason for not having to visit the inmate that some visitors may find welcome.

Treatment by staff

With 44% of visitors saying that they were “always” treated politely by departmental staff and a further 29% saying they were “often” treated politely, this would appear to be consistent with the literature. With only 11 people refusing to respond, a total of 73% of respondents replying that they were “often” or “always” treated politely is a pleasing response for the Department. To put this response in context though, Wozniak (1994) found in his survey of visitors views on the Scottish Prison Service that around 72% of “customer views” relating to staff rated the manner of the staff attending them as good.

Written comments on treatment often blamed the procedures followed by staff rather than the staff’s attitude. For example, several complained about the visiting areas not opening on time, with the visitors themselves volunteering that change of shift can have a big impact on visitors being processed for visits.

Other areas of concern

Although the areas identified above were specifically identified and commented upon by the visitors, one area that was considered to be important before the survey was conducted yet did not feature prominently in the responses was that of the security imposed during a visit. In fact, with very few refusing to answer, 45% of visitors replied that security checks were never a problem when they visited. The only written comments received concerning security had a couple of visitors saying they were frightened by a strip-search being threatened, and with several complaining that visits were terminated when the visitor had to use the toilet. It is apparent that in some correctional centres the access to the toilets by visitors is quite inconvenient for all concerned. The use of toilets by visitors is a priority security matter to the officer in charge of visiting areas, with the toilets being demonstrated to be places where drugs carried in or on the body can be removed for transmission on to the inmate. There is obviously a delicate balancing act required to meet the needs of the visitor to some privacy on the one hand, and the need by correctional administrators to combat the flow of illegal drugs into the correctional centre on the other. As the media see it (Murphy, 1993) “there is no easy compromise - the trade off between threat and compassion is a person-by-person decision”.

Also of concern before the survey was conducted was the impression by key informants that many visitors were having to arrive well before the official opening times for visits so that they could gain access. With 70% of visitors reporting that they did not usually arrive before scheduled visiting hours, this perception has been proven to be wrong. Of those who did report arriving early, the highest number of written responses given as to why they did was so that they could get the maximum visiting time available to them.

Allied to this concern was the worry that waiting times for visits were quite excessive. With 61% entering into a visit within 20 minutes of arrival, there would appear to be only a few rare occasions when the wait for a visit was very long.

This is an area where there have traditionally been problems as the delay in starting a visit may not lie with the correctional centre staff at all but rather with the inmate who does not immediately

respond to the announcement of a visit. Inmates often do not respond immediately either because they choose not to or because they are involved with other matters inside the correctional centre.

The study by Wozniak (1994) into the Scottish Prison Service did not publish waiting times for visits and so direct comparisons can not be made to this study. He did report that 40% said that they had only a "short" time to wait which is consistent with the general response found by this survey.

Frequency of Visits

As this study represents an almost unique attempt to examine visitation to correctional centres from the visitor's perspective, there are few worthwhile international comparisons to be made.

Curiously the frequency of visits reported in this study very closely matches the results of quite frequent visiting found by Schafer (1994) who reported 53% visiting at least once a week, and 20% visiting every two weeks. There was some difference in the proportions of those who visited at monthly or greater intervals with Schafer (1994) reporting 13% visiting once a month, 4% every two months, 3% four times a year, 1% twice a year and 2% once a year. Somewhat in contrast to this position, the British Home Office (1993) National Prison Survey revealed that only 60% of inmates had received a visit from a family member or a friend in the three months before the survey as opposed to the 93% found in this Study. An explanation for this is that the National Prison Survey in the United Kingdom utilised inmates rather than visitors to answer their questionnaire. In this study, as the figures reported are based on visitors who do actually visit, then these two surveys are reporting on two quite separate matters.

In an earlier Australian study, Kemp et al (1982:12) were able to generally confirm this study's results by asserting that "the majority of married prisoners (71%) are currently receiving weekly visits". Fuller (1993) likewise found that 82% of visitors to California womens gaols came at least once a month and 5% only once or twice a year.

It must be remembered that there is a large legal/cultural difference in relation to "common law" wives between America and Australia. An early US study into inmate family relationships by Holt and Miller (1972) found that 25% of male inmates were visited by their "wives" at least weekly. Holt and Miller (1972) reported that 80% of male inmates were not visited by their "wives". This is an important link that deserves further study although international comparisons will, of necessity, be very difficult to undertake.

Gender Issues

The results section describes how a series of chi-square comparisons were made using the twenty key variables identified in order to see if there were any significant differences between those who visit female inmates compared to those who visit male inmates.

As could be expected, more female visitors visited male inmates and more male inmates visited female inmates. Male inmates were visited by their parents at a higher rate than female inmates with the female inmates tending to be visited, apart from their partners, by those whose

relationships were more removed (e.g. cousins, "in-laws").

The fact that the motivations (question 3) behind the visit - to stay in touch, inmate requested it, discuss problems etc - were the same whether the inmate visited was male or female is interesting in its own right. That there were also no significant differences found between visiting male or female inmates for:

- how often the visitor visits the inmate;
- whether they bring children along;
- whether they arrive before visiting hours;
- did they think there were any barriers to visiting more frequently;
- attitudes to the information provided;
- politeness of DCS staff, and;
- whether or not the visitor was directly caring for any children;
- how they travel to the correctional centre;
- their rating of facilities available for children in the correctional centre and
- their aboriginality;

is a fundamental finding of this study. It indicates that there are universal problems and pressures that directly affect the visitation of inmates whether they be male or female. In one sense this is quite surprising as the proportion of male inmates to female inmates is so overwhelming that, on first impressions, this should mean different problems should be encountered. The responses obtained showed that female inmates are visited by their partners at a similar rate to the male inmates is of interest not only to correctional administrators, it is of importance to all those agencies whose focus is the support of families of those incarcerated. This also holds true for children being taken to the visits - support for children of inmates cannot be limited to either male or female inmates only. However caution should be exercised, because of the relatively high total rate of non-response from those who identified as visiting female correctional centres.

This result must be taken in context though. It is wholly dependent on the responses given to specific questions asked of the visitor in this survey. It remains to be seen whether there are other questions that should have been asked that would discriminate between those who visit male or female inmates.

In support of the finding that there appear to be universal pressures facing the correctional centre visitor was the result that there were only a very few differences to be found when the gender of the visitor was analysed. These differences included that the male visitor was more likely to be a parent or a sibling of the inmate, more likely to drive their own car to the visit and less likely to bring a child to the visit.

CONCLUSION

The origins for this survey of visitors to New South Wales correctional centres lie with the United Nations initiative of an International Year of the Family in 1994. These beginnings were developed in co-operation between two community based organisations, Justice Action and CRC Justice Support, and the New South Wales Department of Corrective Services. In keeping with an expressed government need to conduct social impact assessments, this study has identified and focussed on significant issues that face visitors to New South Wales Correctional Centres. It has assessed these issues in a context of both specific correctional terms and in terms of a wider social context within which the family of an imprisoned inmate finds itself. Inside....out, incarceration gradually being extended outside the walls of correctional centre - forces at work that involve the family of an inmate in a way over which they have no control. A movement from inside to outside that many have even failed to realise is happening.

As the review of the literature undertaken for this study has revealed, interest in the area of family visitation and the link to imprisonment extends over many years. Earlier work on linking family-inmate visitation and success on parole is still relevant today, although the identity and role of the family in this process must of necessity now come under increasingly closer scrutiny. This is an area where much more work must be undertaken.

One could have wished for a much higher response rate, but with no follow-up or other mechanisms designed to increase this rate being able to be adopted, it is the best that could have been hoped for. What was surprising is that if it is presumed that the majority of those who choose to respond to a mail-out survey are those who have a lot to complain about, then the results of this survey tend to counter this presumption. With 44% replying that DOCS staff were "always" polite and another 29% saying they were "often" polite the Department has some cause to be heartened by the results. With a relatively small majority of respondents saying there are generally no barriers to more frequent visitation (56%), there is obviously still some room for improvement or encouragement of correctional centre visitation although it does not appear that there are large systematic reasons for not visiting apart from distance and cost pressures for certain visitors.

The motivations for visitation are those one would suppose are central to family life - to stay in touch, to maintain relationships and to keep the family together. What adds a new dimension to this situation is the fact that parents represent the highest category of visitor. Children have also always been a central theme of any work with families and the results of this survey are no different. 52% of visitors bring children along to a visit and those that do bring them are usually directly caring for them. Those that bring children but are not directly caring for them are usually the male inmates' mothers bringing their son's children to the visit. This is an important finding of this survey - the family, whether parents or partner, often have children accompanying them on a visit to the correctional centre. This must be catered for both for the sake of those involved in the visit and those who have to control the visit. Most did not find problems gaining child care in the community, presumably because most bring the children to the visit.

Travelling to a visit can remain a problem for many visitors. 70% choose to use their own car or bike or walk to the correctional centre. The use of public transport appears to be a little used

Inside.....Out

alternative although this alternative is used significantly more by those who visit correctional centres outside the metropolitan Sydney area. Those same visitors usually have to travel further and take longer to complete their trip than their counterparts in metropolitan Sydney. Costs and time limiting their ability to travel has a big impact on those that visit country correctional centres. This is an area where more work must be undertaken and the needs of these visitors have been clearly established by this study.

The concern that visitors may have to arrive early to get a visit at all has been refuted - 70% said that they did not usually arrive before scheduled visiting hours. Those that do are often simply aiming to get the maximum visiting time possible from their trip. Waiting for a visit to start has many complications involving both the inmate and staff of the correctional centre (change of shift, inmates involved in work etc). With around 60% starting their visit within 20 minutes of arrival there is obviously room for some improvement, not the least being improvements urgently needed in some correctional centre waiting areas which are subject to the vagaries of the weather.

Visits are obviously a major part of an inmates life. Over 50% are being visited at least once a week, with this visitation taking place over a number of months - 50% had been visiting for more than 10 months.

The facilities provided for visits are generally acceptable to the visitors with any complaints usually centring on the lack of space made available for the visit. This is especially so for those who bring children to the visit with the facilities made available for children at the correctional centre judged to be "non-existent" by 23% of those who responded and "poor" by another 30%.

There would appear to be no consensus regarding when visiting times should be made available with largely equal numbers complaining that weekend and weekday visits were inconvenient. Perhaps the only agreement in this area was that visiting times should be available seven days a week and into the evening so that people could have some flexibility in their choices. This is an area where only minor changes in local correctional centre operations could obviously have a big impact on the ability of visitors to make their visit.

An important area highlighted in the literature and confirmed by the visitors' response was that involving the provision of information by the Department. With 29% complaining that the information being provided was "poor" or even "non-existent", there is obviously room for much improvement. There were many written comments and examples given where visitors had no idea of what was happening either with themselves or the inmates being visited.

Inside out.... the feeling and the psychological stress pulling on the visitor trying to cope with the needs of the inmate, the community, their families and the state.

In the words of Schafer (1991:68) who is quoting the American National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals, for whatever reasons, it would be wise for correctional administrators to "encourage visitors rather than merely tolerating them".

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Standard information packages for correctional centre visiting be developed and printed. These packages should contain standard information on regulations and rules concerning visiting and explicitly list the rights available to visitors. Penalties for bringing in illegal items and illegal behaviour should also be included in this package. This package should be developed in full consultation with community groups working in the area of corrections, as well as the Inmate Development Committees.
2. Local additions to the visiting rules concerning conditions at a particular centre (e.g. visiting hours) should be printed and available for insertion into the standard package.
3. In an attempt to be pro active in encouraging visits and in recognising the value of the role of visitors to correctional centres, the standard visiting package should be sent to those family members and friends who are nominated by the inmate on their first entry into custody.
4. Introduce a consultative group for each institution where discussions can take place concerning how the visiting area is operating and implementation of visiting policy. Group membership to be drawn from the inmate community, correctional centre staff and identified community groups
5. A state-wide community based consultative group should be formed to co-ordinate and to receive reports from and give guidance to individual institutional consultative groups and to monitor visiting conditions and complaints across the state.
6. The officer-in-charge (visits area), be identified as a specific promotion position with appropriate training modules developed.
7. Increased government funding should be provided to improve visiting areas in New South Wales Correctional centres. Particular emphasis should be directed to providing
 - a) Adequate “child friendly” visiting areas;
 - b) adequate shelter from the weather in areas where visitors have to wait for the visit to commence;
 - c) adequate provision of affordable food and beverages (e.g. non “snack” foods) should be available;
 - d) adequate toilet facilities and
 - e) adequate shelter from the weather and provision of comfortable seating in the visits area.
8. Consideration should be given to the implementation of a specific Children’s Visitation Program (CVP) as conducted in Michigan, USA for possible trial at the Emu Plains Correctional Centre for Women and at selected minimum security male institutions.

Inside.....Out

9. A standard grievance handling procedure should be introduced with both appropriate forms and processes being identified.
10. Monitoring of correctional centre visiting areas be specifically included in the duties of the relevant Regional Commander (Inspector General).
11. As an aid to implementing both grievance and information procedures the following should be introduced;
 - i) Signs displaying :
 - guarantee of service to visitor;
 - the Governors name;
 - the name of the officer in charge of the visits area;
 - rules and regulations relating to visits and
 - items permitted to be brought in.
 - ii) A complaints/suggestions box.
12. As male inmates in particular underestimate the difficulties faced by their partners/families in coping with their absence, appropriate education and psychological programs must be developed to improve not only their awareness of these problems, but what they can do to help. Specific programs involving child development classes (where appropriate) and marriage guidance are examples of programs that could be introduced.
13. An increase in times available for visits including both weekend and weekday visiting time should be introduced across the state so that visitors can have more flexibility in when they visit.
14. Inmate classification decisions include, as a matter of course, considerations based on the location of the inmates' family.
15. All information for visitors must be translated into the major community languages.

ENDNOTES

1. To put this development in context, Justice Action, as explained in their own brochure which accompanied the visitors survey, is “a community group that includes ex-prisoners, workers, students, lawyers and other people. We are particularly concerned with abuses of authority in the legal system, in prisons and in police forces. Justice Action (originally called CEFTAA), campaigned to prove Tim Anderson innocent of the Hilton bombing. We have remained active in supporting the rights of defendants and prisoners, often working with members of the Prisoners Action Group”.
2. To quote from their own brochure, “CRC Justice Support is a community based organisation providing support and advocacy for all people affected by the Criminal Justice System through a wide range of services”. With a staff of 20 permanent employees, CRC Justice Support provide counselling and services in areas like accommodation, transport, employment, training, and family support.

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APPENDIX 1

Mail-Out Questionnaires

Mail-out questionnaires have been widely condemned in the past because of the difficulty in securing an adequate response. However, there are substantial merits in the use of such a methodology which include benefits in terms of cost and speed factors, ease of implementation, and the removal of the substantial bias problems associated with the use of interviewers - reliability, validity, training etc. There are also techniques which could be adopted to reduce the non response rate which centre on the development of a "package" approach. That is, if the questionnaire is well designed, has a limited number of questions, is in response to a community sponsored event (i.e. International Year of the Family) and has a non-threatening covering letter which positively seeks a response, then response can be encouraged. A reply paid envelope would also need to be included in such a package.

One argument against the use of a mail-out questionnaire for a survey like the visitors survey that was advanced was that such an approach was making use of a "database of citizens" and constituted some form of an invasion of privacy. This argument can not be sustained as the name and address of all visitors was already recorded by New South Wales gaol administrators (in this case authorised by clause 91 of the New South Wales Prisons (General) Regulations Act, 1989). As long as the respondent was not able to be identified from their response, and there was no compulsion associated with completing the survey, there could be no argument that the privacy guidelines had been ignored.

Some of the weaknesses generally associated with the mail-out methodology were ultimately not considered to be important, given the type of survey to be conducted. For example, the survey was not really seeking spontaneous answers, but, rather considered responses identifying any problems encountered during visits. This methodology was calculated to provide the widest possible coverage at the least expense given an adequate response.

Hand-Out Questionnaires

This approach has all the advantages and disadvantages of the mail-out questionnaire perhaps with the added advantage of a better response rate. However, due to the general considerations stated above, the number of people required to supervise/hand out the questionnaires in order to cover visiting areas in every New South Wales Correctional Centre becomes quite prohibitive as all institutions would have to be covered. It would not be appropriate to have Custodial Officers hand out the questionnaires as this would influence the response in one way or another. The use of Welfare Officers was canvassed only to reveal that not all institutions had a Welfare Officer permanently present at that time and even with the payment of over - time monies for their presence on weekends, not all would be willing to undertake the task.

As visits can usually take place between 9:30am and 3:30pm on a weekday or a week-end, there was a substantial period to be covered if all visitors were to be approached in a set period. Even if a sampling approach were adopted (times of day not institutions), there would still be a substantial window of opportunity to be catered for. The supervision of the distribution of

questionnaires by supervisory personnel would also require substantial members of staff. These costs would represent additional costs to those associated with the mail-out approach as each package handed out would have include a reply - paid envelope etc.

A serious consideration buried within this methodology was that visitors may be intimidated by being physically approached by those handing out questionnaires and associate the granting of a visit with the completion of the questionnaire. This suggestion has all the more strength as the visitor would presumably be on government property when approached. Some may also believe it is necessary to complete the questionnaire during the time of their visit, even though there should be instructions issued that this is not necessarily the case. A conjectured link between completion of the questionnaire and consequent treatment of the inmate could also place the respondent in an invidious position in their own minds.

Interviews

This methodology has the advantage of having a high response rate. However, the introduction of the dimension of using interviewers has direct implications in terms of costs and ease of implementation. It would be a very large task to provide appropriately trained interviewers at all New South Wales Correctional Centres for a given time period. Not only would this be the costliest methodology to adopt, it would also require an extensive commitment of resources (time, effort, cost, etc) to the training of these interviewers.

Of even greater difficulty would be that of obtaining an interview with the visitors (whether sampled or not) at the centre in the first place. Why would a visitor be willing to be interviewed before their visit - it would cut into their visiting time. Likewise, not many would be willing to be interviewed during a visit. Even after a visit, it is likely that the pressure of having to get transport home as well as controlling any children that may be accompanying them would render most visitors unlikely to grant an interview after a visit.

Added to this difficulty is that of where these interviews could take place. Most institutions would not have the facilities to offer space for interviews which are near to the visitors centre and the idea of interviewing in the open is fraught with difficulty due to unpredictable problems with the weather. Ensuring that the interview is conducted in private would also be extremely difficult in most institutions, especially during visiting hours which are traditionally very busy times in the correctional centres, as there would be little space left during visits in most institutions anyway.

Telephone Survey

This methodology was not seen as appropriate for this study as the main component needed, a private telephone number, was not available.

Contact Made Through Inmates

On the surface, this methodology is attractive in that a sample of visitors based on a carefully drawn sample of inmates, a population we have a certain knowledge of in terms of certain demographic variables, would provide a very good sampling reference starting point. However,

Inside.....Out

gaining the co-operation of inmates is problematic in that even though they may themselves be willing to be interviewed, many would not want their families involved in any Department sponsored research. Ultimately this is an incomplete methodology in that it only really represents an initial contact for drawing a sample of respondents. It would still require the combination of one of the other approaches outlined to succeed.

APPENDIX 2: Visitors Survey Mail-out Questionnaire

VISITOR'S SURVEY

1. Please answer the following questions in terms of your experience at:

TOTAL NUMBER OF FORMS RECEIVED: 1170

OFFICE USE ONLY

1

THINKING ONLY OF THIS GAOL AND THE PRISONER YOU VISIT MOST OFTEN:

2. What is your relationship to this prisoner? (n=1170)

2

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| 21.7 My husband/de facto partner | 12.2 My brother/sister |
| 1.2 My wife/de facto partner | 28.3 My son/daughter |
| 7.1 My boyfriend/girlfriend | — My business partner |
| 29.5 Other (please specify) | |

3. When you visit this prisoner, how often is it because...?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	(Missing)
The prisoner has requested it	14.8	6.5	12.6	8.6	19.2	38.2
To stay in touch/maintain relationship	0.9	1.2	6.2	12.1	63.2	16.5
Companionship	4.9	1.5	7.4	10.0	35.0	41.1
Business matters	31.1	8.1	7.4	1.3	1.9	50.2
Discuss family matters/problems	7.0	6.1	19.4	11.4	16.0	40.2
Discuss prisoner's problems	7.0	7.3	21.6	10.9	14.8	38.5
Discuss my personal problems	16.2	9.2	14.6	5.0	8.9	46.1
Keep the family together/children	9.4	1.5	5.0	7.9	48.2	27.9
Other (please specify) <u>"care/love the prisoner" (n=42); "to offer support" (n=32);</u> <u>"inmates only chance to see children" (n=8); "miss the inmate" (n=6)</u>						

3.1

3.2

3.3

3.4

3.5

3.6

3.7

3.8

3.9

3.11

4. How do you usually travel to the gaol?

- | | | |
|---|------------|----------------------------|
| 69.7 Own car/bike/walk | 5.0 | Public transport plus taxi |
| 6.0 Lift with friends | 0.8 | Taxi |
| 10.1 Public transport | 1.5 | C.R.C. bus |
| Other (please specify) <u>"lift with family" (2.7%)</u> | | |

4

5. How long is the travelling time one way?

range: 5 minutes — 24 hours
10% — 30 minutes or less

5

6. On average, how long are your visits?

range: 20 minutes — 16 hours
50% — 2½ hours or less

6

7. Do you usually arrive before scheduled visiting hours? **29.1** Yes **70.3** No

7.1

If "yes", why?

"avoid being late" (n=26); "to allow for processing time" (n=31);

7.2

"to get maximum visiting time" (n=64); "to get a good seat" (n=21)

How long before scheduled visiting hours? **80% of those responding spent less than 30 minutes**

7.3

8. Once visiting hours have started, how long would you usually wait for your visit?

55% less than 10 minutes

8

9. On average, how often do you visit this prisoner in gaol?

22.7 2 or 3 times a week **19.7** Once a month
30.0 Once a week **6.3** Once or twice a year
19.7 2 or 3 times a month **0.7** Less than once a year

9

10. How long have you been visiting this prisoner in gaol? **range: 1 week — 18 years**

50% 40 weeks or less

10

11. Do you bring children to the visits? **52.3** Yes **46.9** No

11

12. Are the facilities for children at the gaol...

2.9 Excellent **13.8** Good **23.6** Fair **25.3** Poor **19.4** Non-existent (missing) **15.0**

12

13. Thinking about the visits area, how are the following...

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Non-existent	(missing)
Toilets	7.1	30.7	33.6	17.4	7.6	3.6
Lockers	8.2	39.6	27.9	12.1	7.9	4.2
Furniture	3.8	30.1	43.8	20.3	0.4	1.5
Lighting	9.7	55.2	24.9	3.2	2.0	5.1
Temperature	5.6	35.4	32.9	18.8	1.7	5.6
Space	6.7	26.2	32.9	30.1	1.7	2.5
Disabled access	4.0	20.4	16.7	13.7	19.7	25.6
Waiting area	3.8	25.7	35.4	24.8	7.3	3.1
Drink/food machine	7.1	36.6	26.4	16.7	10.5	2.7
Tea/coffee facilities	6.2	28.8	22.8	17.6	20.4	4.2
Canteen/cafeteria	2.4	9.8	8.0	6.6	58.3	14.9

Other (please specify) **"too crowded" (n=19); "need more toys" (n=16);**

"need more outdoor covered areas" (n=18)

13.1

13.2

13.3

13.4

13.5

13.6

13.7

13.8

13.9

13.11

13.12

13.13

13.14

14. Are these problems for you when visiting?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	(missing)	
Waiting time at the gaol	13.2	20.9	37.4	15.1	10.3	3.1	14.1 <input type="checkbox"/>
Distance travelled	23.4	12.9	21.1	9.7	27.4	5.5	14.2 <input type="checkbox"/>
Treatment by officers	39.1	25.0	22.4	4.8	3.8	4.9	14.3 <input type="checkbox"/>
Limited visiting hours or days	27.9	14.4	20.8	10.9	18.9	7.2	14.4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Child care (in community)	43.7	6.1	5.5	3.7	7.8	33.3	14.5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Facilities for children (in gaol)	28.5	7.0	11.5	9.1	19.1	24.7	14.6 <input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of information	23.2	16.9	25.4	10.5	14.4	9.5	14.7 <input type="checkbox"/>
Cost of visiting	30.3	12.1	15.9	7.9	24.7	9.1	14.8 <input type="checkbox"/>
Security checks	44.8	17.3	17.9	3.1	9.1	7.9	14.9 <input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	"unhelpful officers" (n=15); "lack of privacy" (n=9)						14.11 <input type="checkbox"/>
							14.12 <input type="checkbox"/>

15. Reason why visiting times or days are not suitable? (if applicable) (n=353 respondents)

weekday visits more convenient — 16%

weekday visits less convenient — 8%

15

16. Has information provided by the Department of Corrective Services (D.C.S.) about visiting rights and conditions been...

7 Excellent 35 Good 29 Fair 14 Poor 15 Non-existent

Any additional comments? (n=206 respondents)

only given information when asked — 15%; wrong advice — 7%

16.1

16.2

17. Are you and your family treated politely by D.C.S. staff when you visit this gaol?

44 Always 28.5 Often 18.6 Sometimes 4.9 Rarely 3 Never

17

18. Are there any barriers to you visiting more frequently? 44 Yes 56 No

If "yes", please specify? ←

(n=501 respondents)

travel long distances — 27%; work commitments — 10%

18.1

18.2

19. A few personal details:

(a) 27% Male 73% Female

(b) Your age 50% less than 38 years

19.1

19.2



**CRC Justice Support
Inc.**

Level 2
2 Holt Street
Stanmore NSW 2048
Telephone (02) 564 2722
Facsimile (02) 564 1643

Dear Visitor,

We are writing to you as a community organisation working with prisoners and their families to ask you about your needs and experiences when you visit prisons.

The survey was written by Justice Action (previously named CEFTAA) who were concerned that prisoners families as a special group with unique needs were being neglected in the International Year of the Family.

Justice Action and CRC Justice Support, as well as other groups including the Prisoners Action Group, initially had agreement from the Department of Corrective Services to place these surveys in the visiting rooms of each prison. However, after long negotiations, it has been agreed by everyone that the Department of Corrective Services would send out the survey to visitors, allowing the survey to be far more widespread, but that the surveys would be returned to us, CRC Justice Support.

We will open your letter and then give a copy of your survey to both Corrective Services and to Justice Action for collation of the data. **We will make sure your response is totally confidential and can not be linked to you**, so you can tell us honestly what you think.

Enclosed is the survey plus a letter from Justice Action. If you would like to find out more about the groups involved in the survey please fill out and return the contact form. **This will only be given to Justice Action not to Corrective Services.**

If you have any questions please fell free to ring me on 564 2722 or Kath Kenny of Justice Action on 281 5100. I hope that you return your survey and that through this research improvements are made for visitors to prisons in NSW.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth West'.

Elizabeth West
Executive Officer
CRC Justice Support.
25 August, 1994.

- Counselling Networks
- Court Support
- CRC Accommodation Service
- HIV/AIDS Education
- Newcastle Project
- Prison Visiting Scheme
- Sydney Skillshare
- Transport Service
- Women at Work
- Workplace
- Visitors House
- Family Support Centre

Donations over \$2.00



Dear Visitor,

JUSTICE ACTION is a community group that includes ex-prisoners, workers, students, lawyers and other people. We are particularly concerned with abuses of authority in the legal system, in prisons and in police forces. JUSTICE ACTION (originally called CEFTA), campaigned to prove Tim Anderson innocent of the Hilton bombing. We have remained active in supporting the rights of defendants and prisoners, often working with members of the PRISONERS ACTION GROUP.

We normally act as an independent organisation, however, during this, the International Year of the Family, the Department of Corrective Services has agreed to assist with the enclosed prison visitors' survey.

JUSTICE ACTION, with the assistance of other groups including CRC Justice Support, wrote the survey. Corrective Services agrees that the information collected will help show how to **improve conditions** for prison visitors.

Your responses will be **completely anonymous**. You can be assured that your answers **will not be traced to you** if you do not put your name on the survey. To post the completed survey to CRC Justice Support, use the envelope provided. CRC Justice Support will give copies of the survey results to Corrective Services, as well as to us.

To keep in touch with JUSTICE ACTION, write your name and address in the box at the back. You can send this with the survey to CRC Justice Support. They will then pass it on to us (but **not** to Corrective Services). Or you can mail your name and address directly to us at **PO Box K365, Haymarket 2000**, and phone us directly on (02) 281 5100.

A contact list of community and welfare organisations that might assist prison visitors is printed on the reverse side of this letter.

We recommend that you take part in this survey. It is a great opportunity to encourage Corrective Services to do something positive for visitors to prisons.

Yours in Solidarity

BRETT COLLINS

ANNIE WRIGHT

KATH KENNY

TIM ANDERSON

**justice
ACTION**

name.....
address
.....postcode.....
phone number.....
Which Jail are you visiting?.....	What resources or skills could you offer to help us work for
.....	visitors?
Tell us personally anything more about the survey
.....



SOME POSSIBLY USEFUL CONTACT NAMES AND ADDRESSES

CRC Justice Support Inc.
 Level 2, 2 Holt Street
 STANMORE, NSW 2048
 Tel 02 564 2722

Children of Prisoners Support Group Co-op Ltd.
 PO Box 67
 ERMINGTON NSW 2115
 Tel 02 648 5866

Council for Civil Liberties
 PO Box 201
 GLEBE, NSW 2037
 Tel 02 660 7582

Prisoners Action Group
 PO Box K365
 HAYMARKET, NSW 2000
 Tel 02 281 5100

Chaplains — Rev Jim Bishop, State Liaison
 PO Box 13
 MATRAVILLE 2036
 or contact the Chaplain at the jail you visit
 Tel 289 2060

**Sydney Metropolitan Legal
 Aid Commission of NSW**
 Head Office
 11-23 Rawson Place
 Railwat Square 2000
 Tel 02 219 5711
 (You can contact your local Legal Aid
 Office through Head Office)

Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Watch Committee Inc.
 PO Box 65, BROADWAY,
 NSW, 2007
 Tel 566 1216, 699 1557

**Ombudsman's Office
 (privileged communication)**
 580 George St
 Sydney 2000
 Tel 286 1000

Lawyers (privileged correspondence)
 see yellow pages
Sympathetic Members of Parliament
 - c/o Parliament House, Sydney (state matters)
 - c/o Parliament House, ACT (federal matters)

CHILDREN OF PRISONERS SUPPORT GROUP

**COPGS will be running groups
 in the Western Suburbs Area for CARERS, CHILDREN &
 EX-PRISONER PARENTS**

These groups are being set up to break down the isolation, to share ideas and experiences and provide information about prisons and welfare organisations. If you would like more information, if you know of anyone who might be interested, or if you have any ideas, ring FIONA or NESS at Children of Prisoners Support Group Co-op. PHONE 648 5866