

Corrective Services NSW Strategic Research Agenda 2025-2030

Corrections Research Evaluation & Statistics (CRES)

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1.1 Introduction

The Corrective Services NSW (CSNSW) strategic research¹ agenda 2025-2030 identifies priority areas for investigation by researchers, both internal and external to the agency. It was developed to help researchers design and conduct research that is aligned with key CSNSW objectives and current correctional issues.

The research agenda serves as a roadmap to inform the workload and priorities of internal agency activities over 2025-2030. It also aims to provide awareness raising and guidance to external parties who have interests in conducting research in partnership with CSNSW or with access to CSNSW data, staff, facilities, or people completing orders.²

CSNSW supports both internal and external research activities that extend the evidence base for themes outlined in the research agenda. CSNSW provision of support to external researchers can take a number of forms, including:

- commissioning of projects through agency funding streams;
- collaborative arrangements facilitated through in-kind contributions, procurement of external funding such as grants, and co-investigator or co-supervisor contributions;
- facilitation of independent access to research data and other resources through existing Corrective Services Ethics Committee (CSEC) application processes;
- other provision of agency-related technical consultancy or subject matter expertise.

In all cases, CSNSW also endeavours to promote conditions of engagement and communication with external researchers to encourage translation of timely and relevant research into practice.

It is noted that while the research agenda intends to inform stakeholders about priority areas for research within CSNSW, it is not intended to be exhaustive nor restrictive in regard to projects which do not strictly align with these areas. CSNSW provision of support may be guided by priority areas for research outlined in this document although is not contingent on alignment with identified priorities.

The following sections outline a series of focus themes for research. These are accompanied by a number of priority research areas that provide more specific context and direction to the focus themes.

¹ The term 'research' is intended to be inclusive of a range of activities, including formal theoretical or applied research projects, process or impact evaluations, and 'proof of concept' or 'pilot' empirical investigations. A common definition is that these are original investigations undertaken to acquire new knowledge through the collation, analysis and interpretation of quantitative or qualitative data.

² Throughout this document, reference is made to 'people completing orders' to describe those who have been sentenced to either a custodial or community order and to those who are on remand in custody.

1.2 Overview of research focus themes for 2025-2030

CSNSW has identified five focus themes for research activity. These are:

1. Organisational and correctional climates
2. People with diverse and complex needs
3. Improving Aboriginal outcomes
4. Enhanced case management and principles of person-centred care
5. Effective and efficient correctional practice.



Organisational and correctional climates



People with diverse and complex needs



Improving Aboriginal outcomes



Enhanced case management and principles of person-centred care



Effective and efficient correctional practice

1.3 Theme 1: Organisational and correctional climates



Priority research areas

Assessing how people completing orders experience **correctional climates**, including their perceptions of **procedural justice, safety, and relationships**, and how features of these climates influence their wellbeing and rehabilitative outcomes.

Assessing how staff perceive **organisational climates** within CSNSW, including **organisational fairness** and **safety attitudes**, and how features of these climates influence staff members' wellbeing, safety, and other employment outcomes.

Understanding prevailing **staff cultures** within CSNSW and how they may be developed to optimise agency objectives relating to both rehabilitation and safety and security.

Identifying **best practice principles of rehabilitative correctional climates** and exploring how they enable rehabilitative processes and work by the agency to impact outcomes for people completing orders.

Understanding how features of the built **physical environment of prisons** influence the behaviours and experiences of people completing orders and staff.

Evaluating the effectiveness of **staff training** programs and how they contribute to the organisational climates and rehabilitative objectives of CSNSW.

1.4 Theme 2: People with diverse and complex needs



Priority research areas

Understanding the needs and profiles of **diverse groups** of people completing orders, including gender diverse people, those living with disability or mental illness, and culturally and linguistically diverse people.

Developing best practice **models of care for women** that take into account their gendered needs and pathways through the criminal justice system, including those related to parenthood.

Examining the offence-specific needs of people who commit **domestic and family violence (DFV)**, and what interventions and models of care are most effective in reducing their risk of recidivism.

Identifying principles of best practice for implementing **trauma-informed care**, particularly within custodial settings.

Disaggregating evaluations of CSNSW programs and services to investigate **equity of outcomes** across diverse groups.

1.5 Theme 3: Improving Aboriginal outcomes



Priority research areas

Exploring the **culture-specific needs and experiences of Aboriginal people** that may contribute to rehabilitative outcomes.

Understanding features of CSNSW interventions and correctional climates that are more or less **effective for Aboriginal people**, relative to other cultural groups, and how CSNSW models of care can be improved to promote desistance among Aboriginal people.

Exploring how **Aboriginal staff** perceive the organisational climate and how this can be improved to promote recruitment and retention.

Identifying best practice principles for engagement, consultation, and co-design with **Aboriginal communities** to promote collaboration in the post-release reintegration and support of Aboriginal people.

Assessing the extent to which CSNSW correctional climates are culturally safe for Aboriginal people, and how **cultural safety** can be improved through our staff, environments, training programs and organisational practices.

1.6 Theme 4: Enhanced case management and principles of person-centred care



Priority research areas

Understanding the drivers of **wellbeing** for people completing orders and how this contributes to rehabilitative outcomes.

Exploring how **person-centred care** can be conceptualised and implemented in practice, in the context of large correctional organisations such as CSNSW.

Exploring the roles of **collaboration, co-design and autonomy** in case management for people completing orders, and how these relate to outcomes such as completion of community supervision and behaviour change programs.

Understanding the social, instrumental and psychological drivers of change in **social capital** that are influential in processes of desistance.

Examining the effects of CSNSW programs and services relating to **education, vocational training and employment** on rehabilitative outcomes.

Examining the effects of CSNSW programs and services relating to **housing and homelessness** on rehabilitative outcomes.

Identifying best practice principles by which **social connections** such as family, community and culture, and opportunities for mentorship can be integrated into people's experiences of custody and community supervision to support desistance.

Establishing and testing best practice principles of **throughcare** for people being released from prison into the community, including pre-release planning, stepdown care for people released onto parole, and methods of implementing **multidisciplinary partnerships with community agencies** (including government agencies) to best promote integrated service delivery and engagement in those services.

Developing effective methods of assessing and assigning people as part of **classification and placement** procedures to optimise case management outcomes.

Exploring the **health-related needs** of people completing orders, including physical health, mental health, and alcohol and other drug use, and how programs and services can be integrated into holistic case management to support health outcomes.

Identifying and testing best practice principles for people on **remand**, including principles for managing acute challenges at reception and opportunities to deliver programs and services to support prosocial behaviour.

1.7 Theme 5: Effective and efficient correctional practice



Priority research areas

Conducting process and impact **evaluations** of programs and services delivered by CSNSW, including existing and new interventions, to inform the viability of interventions and avenues for continuous improvement.

Conducting **validation of assessments** used by CSNSW to establish their viability and potential improvements to their composition or utilisation.

Expanding on the repertoire of valid assessments available to assess outcomes for people completing orders, including those related to assessment of desistance and instrumental and identity facets of social capital.

Exploring which programs and services are most effective in delivering rehabilitative outcomes, including from the perspective of **cost-benefit analysis** and assessments of relative economic and social costs.

Understanding the **cumulative and interactive effects** of multiple correctional interventions (e.g. vocational training in addition to behaviour change programs) delivered to people completing orders.

Exploring the roles of, and opportunities associated with, **emerging technologies** in efficient and effective correctional practice.

Identifying and implementing principles of **knowledge transfer** by which research evidence for best practice, and other data streams on CSNSW activities and outcomes, can be effectively leveraged to improve operations.

Exploring how correctional environments and practices can be improved to minimise **deaths in custody**.

Exploring models for effective **leadership** training and organisation of relationships and accountability between leaders and other staff.

Assessing CSNSW practices relating to **disciplinary management of misconduct** for people in prison and identifying principles that promote safety, security and the wellbeing of people in prison and staff.

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