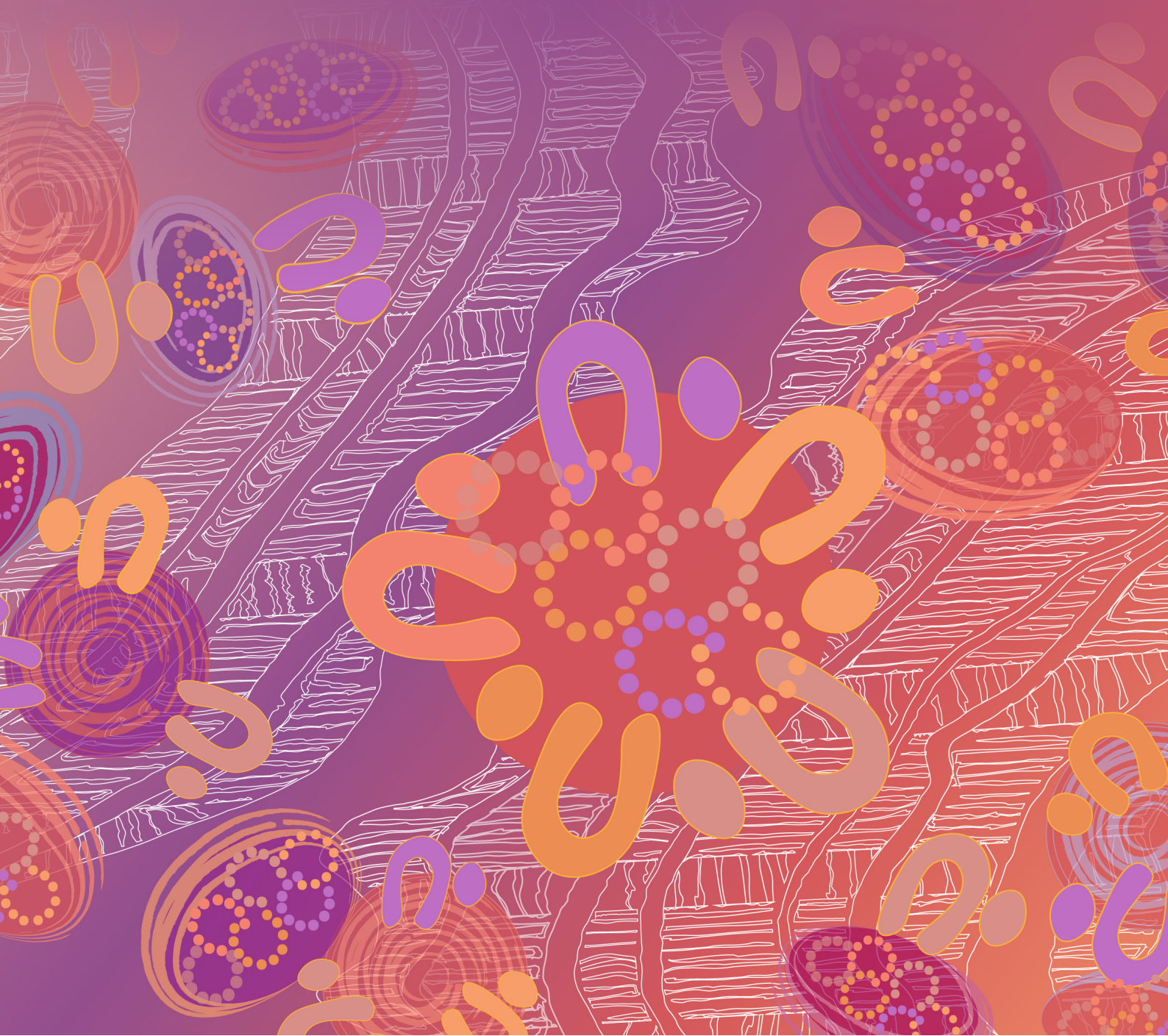
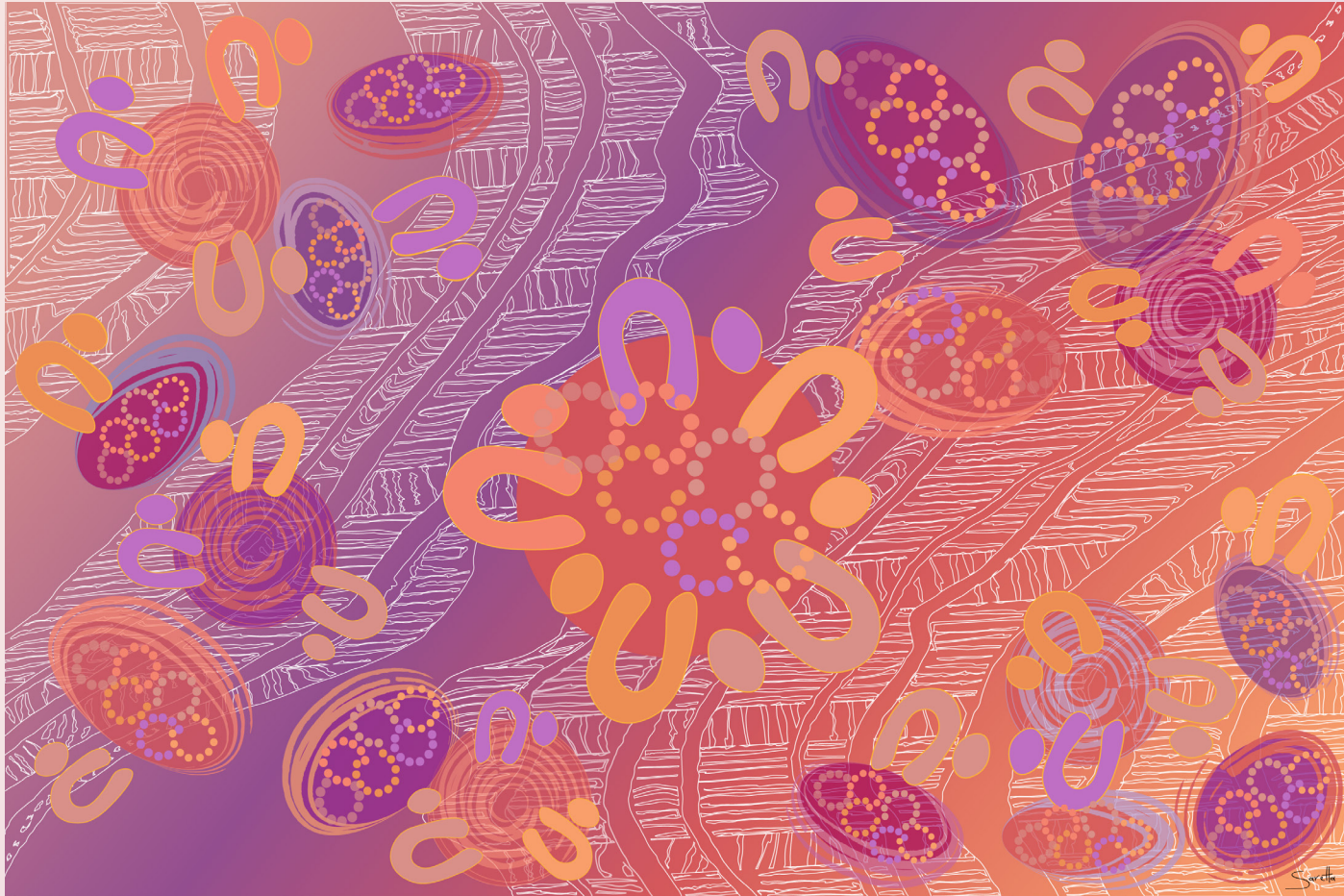


WOMEN'S STRATEGY

2026-2036

CORRECTIVE SERVICES NSW





Tidda Malang - Sisters Together

This artwork was designed by Aboriginal artist Saretta Fielding to showcase the Corrective Services NSW Women’s Strategy and the commitment to uphold and strengthen the dignity, resilience and connectedness of women in the correctional system. Imagery reflects the ethos of knowing, being and doing, as women come together to share their stories and support each other in a future that embraces self-determination, while recognising the contribution of women to a future of reduced intergenerational harm. The artwork represents a gathering of women to highlight their invaluable role as matriarchs, mothers, aunties, grandmothers and cultural knowledge holders of Women’s business. Within this gathering, six interlinked rings depict the stories and strength of women, with each of the links highlighting the six key priority areas of the Strategy. A backdrop of songlines on Country, stretching across the CSNSW footprint, reflects the welcoming and inclusion of all women. This backdrop also includes traditional women’s coolamons, which hold the rings, and together with interwoven women’s symbols, represents the Strategy reaching out to embrace and support women. The coolamon culturally references women gathering in a respectful, safe and culturally grounded environment, supporting healing, restoration, and the conditions for women to thrive. Through vibrancy and narrative Tidda Malang captures hope and the power of women standing side by side and contributing to positive futures.



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Nations of these lands and their enduring connection to Country. We pay our respect to Elders past and present and to the Traditional Owners and Custodians across NSW.

We also acknowledge the cultural wisdom and leadership of Aboriginal women, and their continuing role in keeping families, communities, kin, Country and culture strong. Aboriginal women have a significant role as matriarchs, knowledge holders of women’s business, carers, and protectors. Aboriginal women have been nurturing, guiding and sharing cultural wisdom with their communities for thousands of years.

We recognise the enduring impacts that past policies and practices carry across generations, in particular the intergenerational impacts of the stolen generations which disrupted Aboriginal family systems.

The Women’s Strategy places Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing at its centre, honouring the legacy of collective care and leadership by Aboriginal women and grounding the Strategy in healing and restoration.

We advise this resource may contain artwork or quotes of deceased persons.

‘Aboriginal’ when used in this report is inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Women’s Strategy 2026-2036

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More information

For more information about the Women’s Strategy please contact the Women’s Advisory Unit via wau@correctiveservices.nsw.gov.au.

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Acknowledgement of Women

Corrective Services NSW (CSNSW) acknowledges the women who have shared their story through the consultation process to inform this Strategy. We appreciate your honesty, openness and generosity. We commit to a lived experience approach, ensuring that women's voices inform the design and delivery of correctional services. Wherever possible, we will co-design policy, practice and service delivery with women serving orders.

We also commit to providing a safe and rehabilitative environment where women's strengths are recognised, their needs are addressed, and they are supported to build the skills and connections needed to contribute positively in their communities.

We also acknowledge the contributions and guidance provided through the consultation process by the CSNSW Women's Advisory Council, non-government organisations, Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCO), and government partners. Their invaluable insights – together with the lived experience of the women – have informed this Strategy and will shape CSNSW priorities and approaches to service delivery.

We acknowledge and thank CSNSW staff who shared their experiences – both positive and challenging. Your honesty, commitment and professionalism have helped shape a vision for a system that better meets the needs of women, while also supporting staff and partner organisations.

We thank the dedicated team of women who worked tirelessly to bring this Strategy to life – leading consultations, engaging with partner organisations and communities, writing and refining, and above all, translating the voices and experiences of women into a bold and practical roadmap for transformation.

Language Matters

Language and the labels that are attributed to an individual matter. Labels that are attributed to people who have been convicted of a crime have the power to either assist or subvert their rehabilitation and reintegration.

There is a growing awareness of the importance of using non-stigmatising language for people who are subject to correctional orders, whether incarcerated or serving community-based sentences. Considering this, CSNSW has consciously adopted a person-centred language approach in this Strategy, emphasising respect and dignity. This approach involves using language that acknowledges inherent human dignity, eliminates the use of stigmatising labels, and focuses on the person rather than their legal status. By adopting person-centred language, we emphasise respect and support for the individuality and potential of every person, thus aligning our practices with the values of rehabilitation and reintegration into society. To this end, throughout this document reference is made to 'women completing orders' to describe those who have been sentenced to either a custodial or community order and to those who are on remand.

Victim-Survivors of Crime

We acknowledge the profound and lasting harm that crime causes to individuals, families, and communities. Victim-survivors of crime often carry the deep and enduring impacts of trauma, loss, and the impact of harm.

We recognise this harm and reaffirm our commitment to rehabilitation as a core responsibility. By supporting positive change, we aim to contribute to safer communities and prevent future harm.





Message from the Minister

The Women's Strategy for Corrective Services NSW is a critical step in our Government's commitment to improving safety, dignity and long-term outcomes for women across New South Wales. It outlines a system-wide response to the unacceptable outcomes we continue to see for women in custody and under supervision, and charts a new path towards rehabilitation, accountability, and reform.

This Strategy responds directly to the systemic failures highlighted in the *Special Commission of Inquiry into offending by former Corrections Officer Wayne Astill at Dillwynia Correctional Centre*. It reinforces our responsibility to ensure that safety, transparency and respect are embedded in every part of the correctional system — and that these failures are never repeated.

It also acknowledges the essential and often challenging work of Corrective Services NSW staff. Frontline staff and teams are critical to this reform. The Strategy affirms our commitment to strengthening their capability, supporting their wellbeing, and providing the tools they need to work confidently and compassionately with women in the system.

We also recognise that transformational change cannot be achieved by Corrective Services alone. It requires the sustained partnership of Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations, women's services, government agencies, and community-based providers. This Strategy is shaped by those voices — and it is built on a shared commitment to better, more coordinated, and more culturally safe support for women.

Our Government is committed to driving cultural change within Corrective Services NSW because we know that safer communities begin with safer environments for rehabilitation. Women in custody and community settings have unique needs that must be met with care, respect, and dignity. By creating spaces where women feel supported and remain connected to family and community, we enable genuine rehabilitation and reduce the risk of reoffending. This is not only about improving outcomes for women — it is about strengthening community safety and delivering on our shared responsibility to protect the public.

The Strategy also sits alongside, and actively supports, a broader whole-of-government commitment to improving outcomes for women in New South Wales. It aligns with key initiatives including the NSW Women's Strategy 2023–2026, the Domestic and Family Violence Plan 2022–2027, the Sexual Violence Plan 2022–2027, and the NSW Strategy for the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence 2024–2028. Together, these strategies represent a clear and consistent agenda to address structural inequality, improve safety, and support women's economic, social and emotional wellbeing.

I commend this Strategy and thank all those who contributed to its development — especially the women whose lived experiences shaped its direction, and the staff and partners who will help bring it to life.

The Hon. Anoulack Chanthivong

Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading
Minister for Building
Minister for Corrections
Minister for Industry and Trade
Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology



Commissioner's Statement

It is with deep respect and enduring commitment that I present the inaugural *Corrective Services NSW Women's Strategy 2026–2036*. This landmark Strategy represents a bold and necessary step toward building a correctional system that recognises and responds to the unique needs, experiences, and strengths of women. It sets a clear, long-term vision for how we prioritise women in our care over the next decade.

Although women represent a smaller proportion of the correctional population their pathways into and through the justice system are distinct. Most women in contact with Corrective Services have experienced trauma, domestic, family and sexual violence, substance abuse, mental health issues, socio-economic disadvantage, unemployment and homelessness, and are highly vulnerable to continued abuse and exploitation both in custody and in the community. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are significantly overrepresented, reflecting the ongoing impacts of colonisation, dispossession, and systemic inequality.

Yet despite these challenges, women bring extraordinary resilience, insight, and care. They are mothers, sisters, daughters, carers, and leaders — often the backbone of families and communities. Recognising and supporting their strengths is essential to any effective, equitable correctional service.

For too long, the correctional system and structures have not reflected the realities of women's lives. This Strategy challenges this legacy. It reimagines how we work — shifting from fragmented responses to a coordinated service ecosystem that spans custody and community and that places family, culture, restoration and hope at the centre of rehabilitation and reintegration.

This is not work that we can do alone. Real and lasting change will require partnership: across government, with Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations, women's services, and community providers. It will require investment in staff — equipping them with training, resources, and support to deliver a culturally safe and gender-responsive service. And it will require clear governance, transparency, and accountability to ensure that our actions deliver real outcomes for women and communities.

We envision a future where fewer women are imprisoned, where women are supported to thrive, and where the correctional system reflects the values of justice, equity, and respect. This Strategy is not just a reform agenda — it is a statement of intent. A commitment to work alongside women, to listen deeply, and to lead with courage and care.

Together with the women, staff and partner organisations, we will transform correctional policy and practice. We will create safer, fairer, and more effective pathways that empower women to heal, grow, and build strong, connected futures.

Gary McCahon, PSM

Commissioner, Corrective Services NSW

Why a Women's Strategy is Needed

Women in the correctional system face distinct and complex challenges that demand a different response than that designed for men. Although women represent a small proportion of the overall correctional population, they are disproportionately impacted by trauma, violence, poverty, and systemic disadvantage. Many enter custody with significant histories of victimisation, mental health issues, substance use, and disrupted family and community connections. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, these challenges are compounded by the intergenerational impacts of colonisation, forced removal, and structural inequality.

CSNSW has taken steps to address these needs through initiatives such as the Women's Diversionary Pathway Program, Jacaranda Women and Children's Program, the Co-located Child Protection Caseworker and the Continuous and Coordinated Model of Care initiatives. While valuable, these initiatives operate within a system still shaped by male-centric policies and practice. Gender-neutral approaches often fail to meet women's needs, leading to missed opportunities for intervention, service gaps, and environments that may re-traumatise rather than support rehabilitation. Many women, particularly those incarcerated for short periods, or held on remand, return to the community without adequate support, contributing to high rates of reoffending and cycles of intergenerational harm.

The Women's Strategy signals a commitment to systemic reform. Developed around the lived experiences of women, it provides a framework for sustained, organisational-wide change. Isolated programs and initiatives are not enough. Instead, a service ecosystem is needed to bring together policies, practice, and partnerships to create a coherent, integrated system of support.

The Strategy is underpinned by CSNSW's legal obligations in the *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999*, to provide a safe, secure, humane, and rehabilitative environment. Rehabilitation is a statutory responsibility, reinforced by international human rights frameworks, including the United Nations Bangkok Rules, Mandela Rules, and Tokyo Rules, which call for trauma-informed care, and non-custodial alternatives. The Strategy also aligns with broader federal and state government strategies on women's safety, equity and wellbeing. These include the NSW Women's Strategy 2023-2026, NSW Domestic and Family Violence Plan 2022-2027, NSW Sexual Violence Plan 2022-2027, NSW Strategy for the Prevention of Domestic, Family, and Sexual Violence 2024-2028, which is aligned with the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032.

The implementation of this Strategy forms a key component of the NSW Government's response to the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Offending of Former Correctional Officer Wayne Astill. This Inquiry exposed serious and systemic failures in how the correction system protects and supports women, providing a clear mandate for reform. It serves as an authorising environment for far-reaching, structural change – one that places dignity, safety and accountability at the centre of how the system operates.

This Strategy is not just a policy document – it is a blueprint for change. It sets out a coordinated, evidence-informed, whole-of-system response to the needs and strengths of women in the correctional system. It charts a path to reduce incarceration, improve outcomes, and build a rehabilitative system grounded in care, connection, and collective accountability.

How this Strategy was Informed

Extensive Consultation: Three Voices, One System

Insights from System-Level Oversight and Institutional Review

Key Data for Women

Insights from Research and Evidence

Extensive Consultation: Three Voices, One System

The Women’s Strategy is shaped by the voices of women, staff, and partner organisations across NSW. Between March and June 2025, more than 400 people contributed to statewide consultations, including women in custody and under supervision, staff from across the system, and government and community organisations.

Consultation with women was guided by an Aboriginal methodology, led by a respected Aboriginal woman and practitioner. Yarning circles were held in every correctional centre that houses women, as well as in selected community offices and transition sites. Women shared their experiences, strengths, and priorities for change. Staff and service partners offered practical insights and bold ideas, helping to identify both the barriers and opportunities for system reform.

For full details, see the Women’s Strategy Consultation Report.

What We Heard

Recognise my strength and identity.

I am more than my sentence — I am a mother, a daughter, a sister, an auntie, an Elder, a community member. See me for who I am and what I bring.

Support my rehabilitation and self-determination.

I have the strength to grow and rebuild my life. I need environments that prioritise safety, dignity, and support.

Strengthen my family and cultural connections.

Family, culture, and community are not optional — they are the foundation of my healing and future.

Invest in my future.

Education, skills, and employment pathways are not extras — they are the keys to my independence and success.

Model empathy and accountability.

Leaders and staff must role model trauma-informed, culturally safe, and gender-responsive practice every day.

Support our wellbeing and growth.

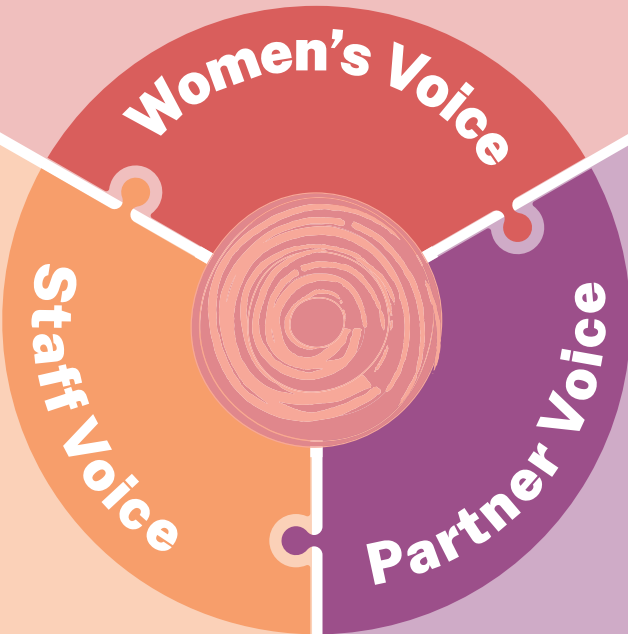
Staff need trauma-informed workplaces, professional development, cultural capability, and wellbeing supports.

Design for women, not men.

Facilities, policies, programs, and practices must be designed for women’s needs and informed by culture.

Reflect the communities we serve.

Recruit and retain staff who reflect the diversity of the women we work with — women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and CALD staff.



Partner with us early and flexibly.

Support and invest in innovation, community-led solutions, and flexible, sustainable partnerships.

Simplify system navigation.

Build consistent, accessible processes to enable services to work with women across all correctional centres.

Work across systems.

Cross-agency collaboration and shared data are essential to drive outcomes for women.

Expand diversion and reintegration supports.

Increase investment in early intervention, housing pathways, therapeutic programs, and community-led social justice programs.

Insights from System-Level Oversight and Institutional Review

These insights reflect consistent findings from inspections, inquiries, coronial inquests and system reviews. They reveal patterns of harm and missed opportunity — and point to the conditions required for safety, dignity and rehabilitation. The Women’s Strategy is shaped by these lessons and will continue to evolve as the system listens and learns.

1. A System Built for Men Cannot Meet the Needs of Women

Correctional policies, services and environments were designed around men. This leaves women — particularly Aboriginal women, mothers, and those with disability — without the support and safety they need to heal, grow, and reconnect.^{21, 22, 30}

2. Safety Must Mean More Than Security

Women in custody need cultural, emotional, and relational safety — not just containment. Systemic racism, coercion, and disconnection undermine dignity and wellbeing, especially for Aboriginal women and mothers.^{23, 26, 27, 30, 31}

3. Community-Based Interventions Should be Prioritised as They Are More Effective

Disciplinary practices like segregation and restriction are often used in place of therapeutic or trauma-informed care. These responses escalate harm, particularly for women with complex trauma, disability, or neurodivergence.^{21, 25, 27, 30}

4. Disconnection Harms, Connection Heals

Maintaining family, culture and community ties is vital. Yet too many women — especially Aboriginal mothers — are separated from their children, culture and Country, with devastating intergenerational impacts.^{22, 23, 27, 30, 31}

5. Partnership, Accountability, and Self-Determination Matter

System reform requires strong partnerships with Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations, respect for Aboriginal data sovereignty, and clear accountability for cultural safety, ethical practice, and shared outcomes.^{23, 30, 31}

6. Lived Experience and Oversight Must Guide Reform

Women’s voices — and especially those of Aboriginal women — must shape policies and practices. System change must be informed by lived experience and strengthened by continuous learning from inspections, inquests, and inquiries.^{24, 26, 30, 31}

The ongoing implementation of the Women’s Strategy will be strengthened by continued review of inquiry, oversight, and commission reports as they arise — ensuring the Strategy remains responsive, accountable, and grounded in women’s lived realities.



Key Data for Women

Disproportionate Impact and Over-representation



Homelessness

Of all women released from custody in 2023-24, **18% were homeless** on reception

12%

have a recorded disability

20%

non-English speaking background

35%

have less than 10 years education

Aboriginal Over-Representation

41%

of women in custody are Aboriginal

34%

of women on community orders are Aboriginal

Substance Use

60%

of women in custody have a current drug related issue

Community Orders

38%

drug issue

20%

alcohol issue

Victimisation*

98%

of Aboriginal women in custody have experienced victimisation

83%

of Aboriginal women in custody have been victims of domestic violence

66%

of Aboriginal women in custody were victimised as children

Care and Connection

54%

of women in custody have children

19%

had care of their children prior to custody

2%

are pregnant

Mental Health or Self-harm

72%

mental health or self-harm – in custody

32%

of women on community orders are engaged in mental health treatment

Legal Profile and System Outcomes



At 31 March 2025, there were **901** women in **custody**

As at 31 March 2025 there were **6675** women on **community-based orders**



Community Corrections

Women comprise **18%** of all individuals managed by Community Corrections on **community-based orders**



Violent offending[^]

Of all females in custody in 2024, approximately **50%** had a **violent offence** as their most serious offence

Remand and Short Sentences

52%

of women in custody are on remand

50 days

average time spent on remand

50%

of women on remand are released without sentence or received a non-custodial sentence

156 days

average length of incarceration for women released from a custodial sentence

Offending and Reoffending

67%

of reoffending is property related

Rate of reconviction for personal, property and serious drug offence within 12 months of release from custody

38.5%

of Aboriginal women

19.7%

of non-Aboriginal women

Data sourced from Corrective Services unless otherwise indicated.

*Source: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research. Data accurate as at 31 December 2024.

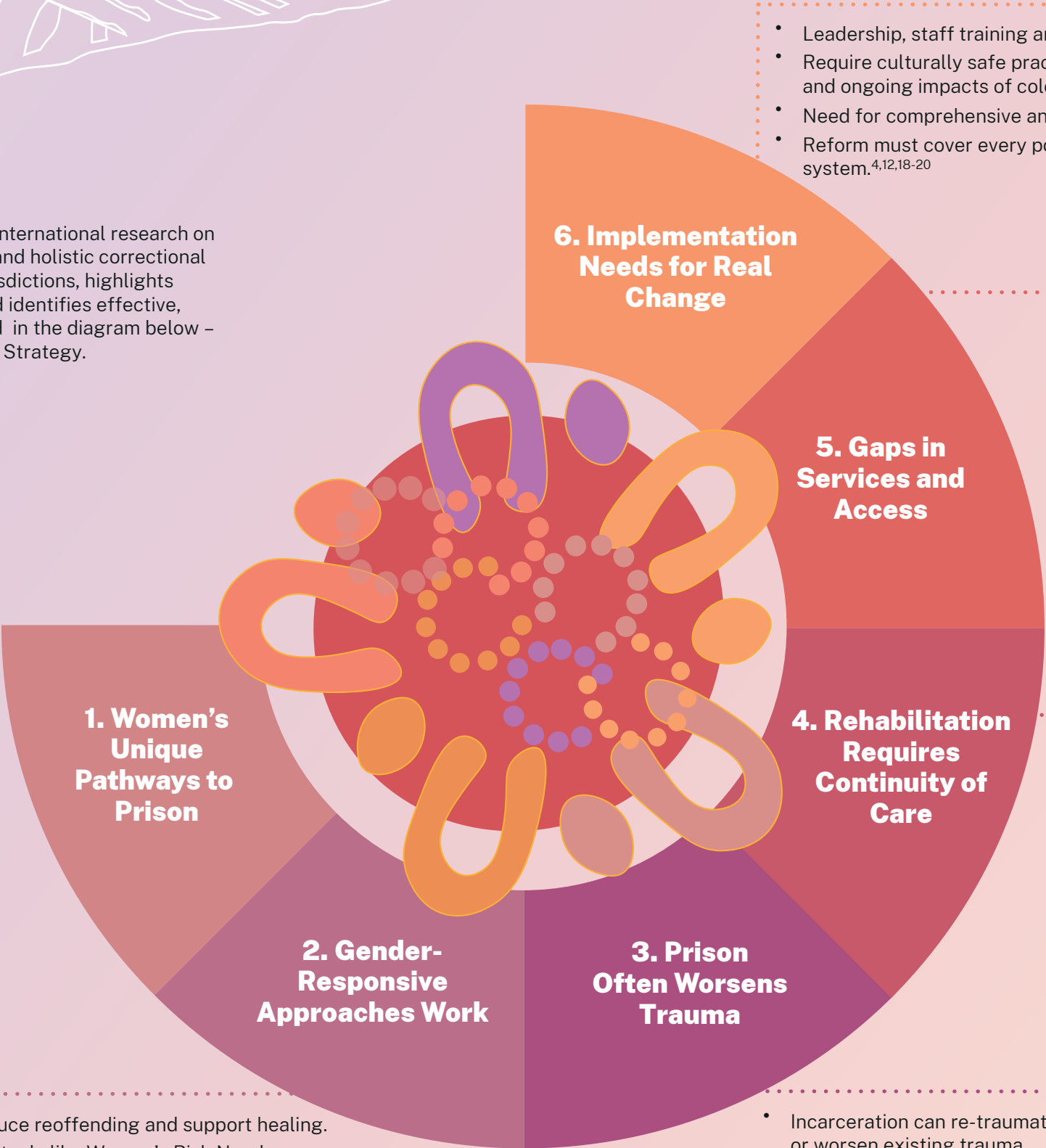
[^]Note: A violent offence includes homicide and related offences (ANZSOC 01), Acts intended to cause injury (ANZSOC 02), sexual assault and related offences (ANZSOC 03), or robbery, extortion and related offences (ANZOSC 06).

Insights from Research and Evidence

This Strategy draws on a strong body of national and international research on gender-responsive, trauma-informed, culturally safe, and holistic correctional practice. Evidence from Australia and comparable jurisdictions, highlights common patterns for women in the justice system and identifies effective, promising responses. These key insights – summarised in the diagram below – have directly informed the design and direction of the Strategy.

- Women experience disadvantage, such as family violence, substance use, mental illness, homelessness, low education.
- First Nations women face compounded trauma due to colonisation and dispossession.
- Cultural diversity adds another layer of disadvantage, with refugee and migrant women experiencing distinct pathways into prison.
- Women’s pathways are fundamentally different to men’s. ¹⁻⁴

- Reduce reoffending and support healing.
- Use tools like Women’s Risk Needs Assessment and gender-responsive case management.
- Strong focus on healthy relationships and relational rehabilitation. ⁵



- Leadership, staff training and support are critical.
- Require culturally safe practices that recognise historical and ongoing impacts of colonisation.
- Need for comprehensive and ongoing evaluation.
- Reform must cover every point of contact with the system. ^{4,12,18-20}

- Programs often focus on single risks (e.g. substance use, domestic violence).
- Few services address complex, intersecting needs.
- Strict criteria and limited resources exclude many women.
- Services often target specific cultural groups rather than addressing the complex, intersecting needs that recognise both cultural identity and other disadvantage.
- Universal access remains a goal, but often unmet. ^{1,13-17}

- Extend support from custody → transition → post-release.
- Interventions should be individualised and delivered by skilled workers.
- Rehabilitative environments help transform prison culture and ensure women’s safety. ^{4,5,8-12}

- Incarceration can re-traumatise women or worsen existing trauma.
- Need for diversionary programs for non-violent offences and women on remand.
- Community-based interventions should be prioritised as they are more effective. ^{5-8,11}

Strategic Foundations

Building a Service Ecosystem

This Strategy is underpinned by an ecosystem framework that recognises the complex, connected systems that shape women's experiences – including correctional, social, health, legal, and community services. Rehabilitation cannot occur in isolation; women's pathways into and out of the justice system are shaped by structural disadvantage, trauma, and systemic failures and cannot be addressed in isolation. Supporting women to make positive changes, rebuild, and reintegrate requires a coordinated response across these systems, ensuring that rehabilitation is embedded at every stage of their journey.

The ecosystem approach integrates legal and human rights obligations, cultural safety, trauma-informed care, and whole-of-system responsibility for rehabilitation and recovery. It draws on international standards, including the United Nations Bangkok Rules, and goes further by embedding Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing, and placing women's lived experience at the centre of system design and accountability.

To build a system that is gender-transformative, preventive and rehabilitative, we must work in genuine partnership across sectors, strengthen Aboriginal-led and community-based services, and design responses that reflect the strengths needs and aspirations of women. This Strategy provides the pathway to build that service ecosystem – grounded in care, connection, and collective purpose.

Our Vision

We envision a correctional system that recognises and responds to the unique experiences, strengths, and needs of women. A system where every interaction focuses on rehabilitation by upholding dignity, supporting positive change and strengthening connection to family, culture, and community.

We are committed to a future where Aboriginal women are no longer over-represented. This means working in partnership with community and valuing the strength, knowledge, and leadership of Aboriginal women.

Through strong partnerships and meaningful support, we will enable women to draw on their strengths, pursue their goals, and thrive beyond the system. We know that by transforming our system, we can support women to transform their lives, which leads to safer communities.

The Purpose of this Strategy

To provide safe, respectful, and culturally grounded environments that place rehabilitation at the centre of corrective services for women – enabling dignity, resilience, and connectedness, and recognising women's roles as cultural knowledge holders and central figures in families and communities.

We recognise the impact of incarceration not just on women, but on their children, families, and communities. Reducing intergenerational harm is a core purpose of this Strategy.

Our Goals

Contribute to preventive and diversionary **initiatives to keep women out of custody**, whilst upholding judicial decisions and ensuring community safety and a particular focus in **reducing the disproportionate number of women held on remand**.

1.

Promote a consistent experience of **safety, and dignity** across all correctional environments, supporting rehabilitation in ways that enable **women to take accountability and be empowered** to change their lives for the better.

2.

Support timely and effective **reintegration** through pathways that prioritise **rehabilitation, accountability, and family and community connection**.

3.

Deliver a contemporary **gender-responsive, trauma-informed and culturally safe** correctional service for women.

4.

Create a foundation of **principled practice** for **staff**, where every decision is guided by **care, safety, dignity, and cultural respect**.

5.

Build a culture of **trust, transparency, and accountability**, where staff are supported to take **ethical action, raise concerns, and lead change**.

6.

Value partnerships, lived experience and shared knowledge to improve outcomes and learn from one another.

7.

Ensure that **women** are **supported** in the **least restrictive environment** that meets their needs.

8.

Commitments to Women

Through consultation with women, staff, government and community partner organisations, we identified four foundational commitments that define what a just, ethical, and effective system must feel like.

1. You will be treated with dignity and respect - seen for who you are, not what you have done. Your strengths, needs and goals will shape your journey.

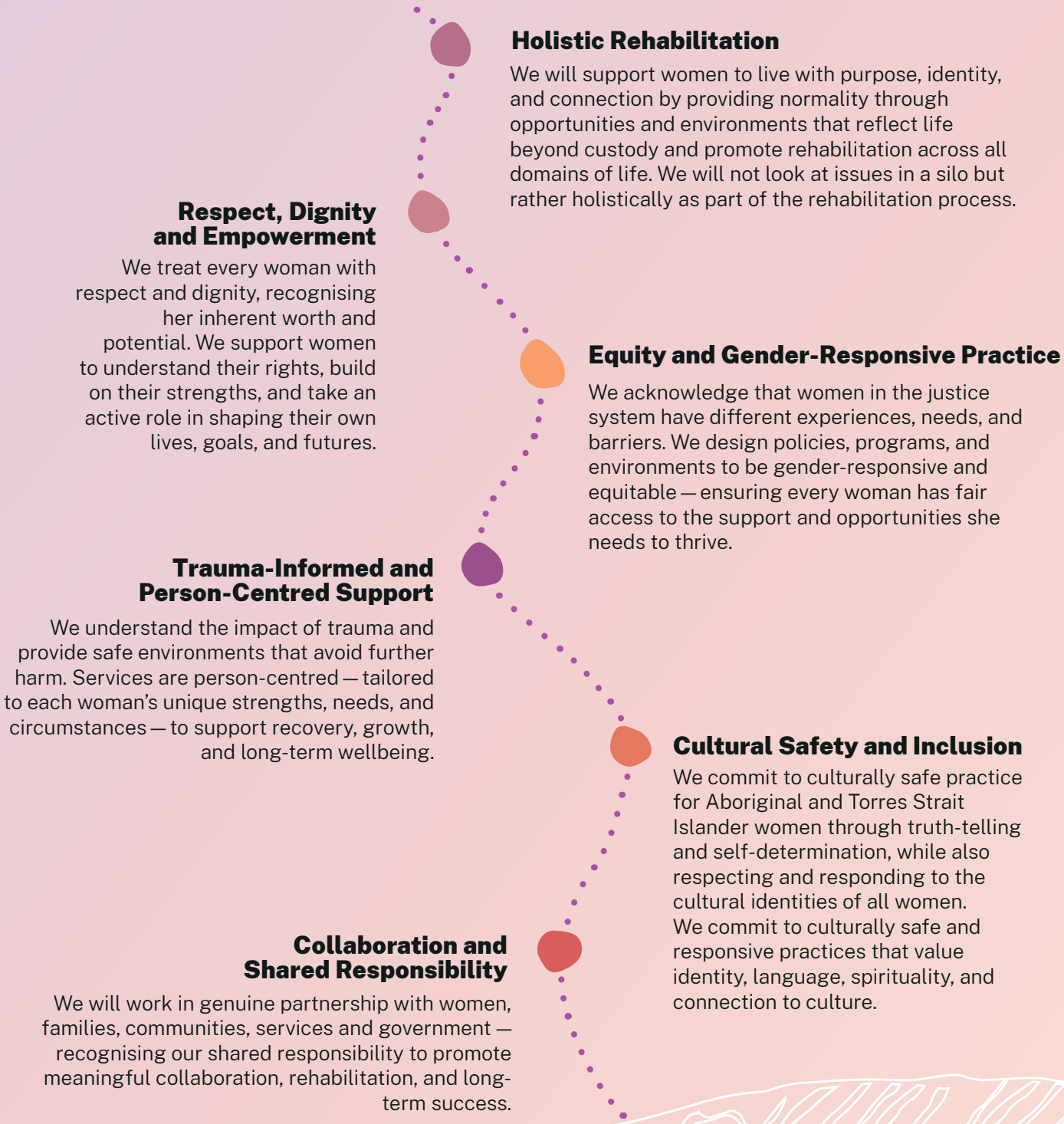
2. You will be safe and supported in rehabilitative environments that meet your needs and support you to leave custody safely - providing physical, emotional, psychological and cultural safety and the services and support needed for positive change and growth.

3. You will be able to maintain connection with your family, kin and culture - recognising that these connections are essential to rehabilitation and reintegration.

4. You will be provided opportunities to build skills and knowledge - ensuring that you can create new pathways for your future.

Principles that Underpin this Strategy

For rehabilitation to be possible, women need environments, services and interventions that are underpinned by key principles. These principles are foundational and guide behaviour, decision-making and service delivery. We know that by upholding our correctional system by these principles, we will help to improve community safety.



The Journey we are Transforming

The experience of women in the correctional system must be fundamentally transformed — not at just one point, but across the entire journey. Women have openly shared their experience of the correctional system. These experiences and their voices, along with CSNSW staff and partner organisations can see the opportunities for transformation. Transformation requires more than programs — it demands a connected, relational, and culturally safe approach from first contact with corrective services through to reintegration, embedded within environments that foster dignity, safety, and opportunity.

FUTURE

..... TRAUMA INFORMED CARE CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE GENDER RESPONSIVE



Strategic Priorities



Priority 1

Embedding a Rehabilitative Culture of Safety, Wellbeing and Purpose



System-level outcomes

- The correctional environment supports rehabilitation, dignity, connection, and hope
- Women and staff feel physically, emotionally, and culturally safe
- A shared culture of care, respect, and accountability is visible across all settings
- Women's individual needs — including trauma, disability, and distress — are recognised and responded to
- Preventing harm is embedded in leadership, policies, and everyday practice

What this priority means

We will lead a whole-of-system transformation to build a culture focused on rehabilitation — defined as safe, wellbeing-centered, and purposeful. This is not about a single program or team — it is about embedding rehabilitation into every setting, policy and practice across the correctional system, creating environments where positive change and reintegration can genuinely occur.

Creating this kind of culture means ensuring women and staff feel physically, emotionally, and culturally safe. It requires more than preventing harm — it means prioritising accountability, strengthening transparency, and supporting rehabilitation at every level of the system.

This transformation must be underpinned by trauma-informed and culturally safe practice, and guided by Aboriginal knowledge systems that centre relationality, respect, and collective responsibility. It must recognise and respond to the experiences of women with disability, mental health needs, and histories of violence or neglect — ensuring they are not only protected but empowered.

Why it matters

Research and lived experience show that the correctional environment itself can either support or undermine rehabilitation.¹² Environments marked by fear, coercion, or instability exacerbate trauma, increase distress, and reinforce cycles of harm.^{6,7}

Conversely, when women feel seen, heard, and respected, and when staff feel supported to work with care and integrity, the entire system becomes safer, more ethical, and more effective. Building a rehabilitative culture is essential to reducing reoffending, improving staff wellbeing, and ensuring public confidence in the justice system.¹²

Oversight bodies have repeatedly found that harm often results not from isolated incidents, but from system-wide failures in culture, leadership, and accountability. Embedding a positive and purposeful culture is one of the most powerful ways to prevent abuse and create lasting change.^{10, 25-31}

Priority 2

Strengthening Prevention, Early Support and Pathways to Community



System-level outcomes

- Fewer women – especially Aboriginal women – enter or return to custody
- Women are identified early and connected to appropriate, culturally safe support
- Community-based options are more accessible, coordinated, and grounded in Aboriginal cultural authority
- Community links and support are embedded into decisions across the system
- Remand rates decline through pre and post release support

What this priority means

We will strengthen system-wide responses to prevent criminalisation and reduce the unnecessary imprisonment of women. This means acting early, targeting the underlying causes of women's involvement in the justice system, and ensuring safer, more effective community-based alternatives are available.

This priority includes tailored strategies for women on remand, recognising that women on remand have not been convicted and are often there due to a lack of safe, supported options in the community. Early support and coordinated services can break cycles of crisis and keep women safely out of custody.

We will work in partnership with Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations to expand place-based, culturally safe prevention and diversion options. Aboriginal women are supported through connection to Country, kin, and community, and through services that reflect Aboriginal ways of knowing, being, and doing.

Whole-of-system prevention means more than diverting individual cases – it requires shared commitment across government, legal, health, housing, disability and community sectors to provide timely, integrated, and culturally safe support.

Why it matters

Aboriginal women are the fastest-growing prison population in Australia. Their over-representation is driven by intergenerational trauma, systemic racism, and a lack of culturally safe, community-based supports.¹⁻⁴

Most women in prison have experienced complex trauma, violence, homelessness, or health and social disadvantage. Incarceration often worsens these issues and disrupts connections to children, culture, and community – especially for Aboriginal women.^{1-4, 31}

Short periods of custody – especially on remand – are harmful and disruptive. Evidence shows that to be most effective, this time in custody needs to focus on connecting women to community-based, culturally embedded support.

Priority 3

Building Staff Capability and a Learning Organisation



System-level outcomes

- Staff feel safe, supported, and confident in their roles
- Learning, reflection, and development are part of everyday work
- Leaders create team cultures that support growth and care
- The workforce is skilled in trauma-informed, culturally safe, and gender-responsive practice, including strong Aboriginal cultural capability
- Restrictive practices are reduced through ethical, relational responses
- Women experience safer, more respectful, and consistent support from staff

What this priority means

We will strengthen the capability and confidence of our workforce by embedding learning, care, and shared purpose into the culture of corrective services. Supporting staff is not just about training – it's about creating an environment where learning is valued, reflective practice is encouraged, and everyone feels safe and supported in their role. It also means deepening cultural capability across the workforce, grounded in Aboriginal cultural authority, truth-telling, and respect for Country.

This priority focuses on building capability at every level – from induction to leadership – and across every function, not just frontline roles. It includes systems for reflective supervision, professional development, and leadership that models ethical, gender-responsive, and trauma-informed practice.

A learning organisation recognises that frontline practice is shaped by policies, environments, and leadership. It invests in people, builds collective capability, and adapts based on evidence, feedback, and experience. When staff are supported to work well, women experience more respectful, consistent, and empowering interactions – improving their safety, wellbeing, and rehabilitation outcomes.

Why it matters

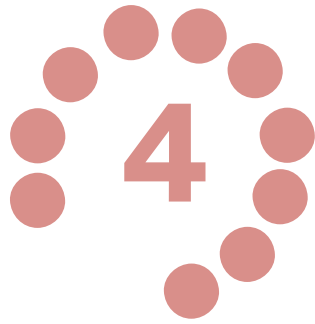
The quality of care, safety, and rehabilitation in the correctional system depends on the people delivering services.^{5, 6} Staff who feel supported, valued, and equipped are more likely to build positive relationships with women and contribute to a safer, more respectful environment.

Supporting staff wellbeing also reduces stress, burnout, and turnover. It creates a more stable, ethical workforce – and a system that can better meet the complex needs of women.^{6, 11, 12}

Becoming a learning organisation means holding ourselves accountable, responding to challenges with curiosity rather than blame, and continuously improving how we work – so that both staff and women can thrive within the system.

Priority 4

Designing Pathways for Stronger Futures



System-level outcomes

- Rehabilitation pathways are clear, coordinated, and culturally responsive
- Women can access the services and supports they need
- Family, culture, and community — including Aboriginal cultural connection — are embedded in service design and delivery
- Women are supported throughout their corrective services journey, including post-release
- Reintegration efforts improve long-term outcomes for women, families, and communities
- Pathways are inclusive and accessible for women with disability and complex needs

What this priority means

We will design rehabilitation and reintegration pathways that support women from reception through to release — and beyond. Reintegration is not a one-off event; it is a supported, purposeful journey that begins the moment a woman enters the correctional system.

These pathways must reflect the complexity of women's lives — their identities, relationships, responsibilities, and aspirations. They must provide consistent, holistic support across custody and community, including access to mental health services, drug and alcohol treatment, education, programs, employment, housing, health care, and family and parenting services.

This priority centres family, culture, and community as protective and restorative forces. For Aboriginal women, connection to Country, kin, language, and community is essential to identity and successful reintegration. Supporting women to stay connected to their children, culture, and communities strengthens rehabilitation and reduces the risk of reoffending.

We will work alongside Aboriginal organisations and leaders to ensure rehabilitation pathways are culturally safe, locally responsive, and grounded in Aboriginal ways of knowing, being, and doing.

Why it matters

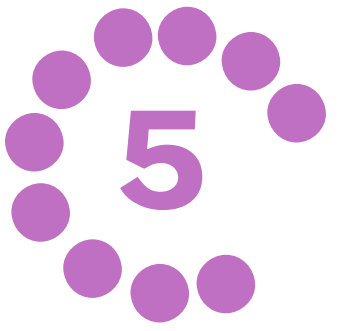
Many women move through custody without the right support at the right time. Transitions between custody and community are especially difficult. Women with disability often face additional barriers to accessing support and require inclusive, accessible pathways that respond to their specific needs.

Aboriginal women are disproportionately impacted by imprisonment and systemic barriers to reintegration. Culturally embedded, community-based rehabilitation improves outcomes for women and strengthens community capability.^{4, 8, 12}

Strong rehabilitation pathways support self-determination, reduce reoffending, and help women rebuild their lives — with benefits for families and communities.^{4, 12}

Priority 5

Partnerships for System and Community Impact



System-level outcomes

- Women experience more coordinated and responsive support
- Partnerships with Aboriginal organisations are grounded in cultural authority and long-term trust
- Aboriginal organisations and lived experience inform service design and delivery
- Community-led partnerships are embedded into planning and operations
- Services work together to support women's long-term wellbeing and reintegration
- Collaboration is seen as core business — not optional

What this priority means

We will partner with Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations, women's services, and community provider organisations to deliver responsive, place-based support. These partnerships will be grounded in cultural authority, trust, and shared outcomes. While Aboriginal leadership and lived experience shape service design, this priority focuses on the collaborative delivery of support to women.

This priority focuses on sharing knowledge and resources to create a coordinated, person-centred service system. Partnerships must be grounded in cultural safety, mutual respect, and shared responsibility — with a strong role for Aboriginal leadership and lived experience.

Collaboration should extend beyond referral pathways. It includes joint planning, co-design, co-delivery, and community-led solutions that reflect local strengths and needs.

Why it matters

Women's needs cannot be met by one agency or service alone. These needs span housing, health, family, employment, disability, justice, and community support. When services work together, women are more likely to receive the right support at the right time.^{4, 5, 9, 13}

Stronger partnerships build more culturally safe, connected, and effective responses. They also strengthen community capability — supporting safer communities and long-term change.^{2, 4, 9}

Priority 6

Embedding Leadership, Governance, and Accountability



System-level outcomes

- Leadership and governance structures are inclusive, transparent, and aligned to system purpose
- Aboriginal leadership and lived experience inform decisions across policy and operations
- The system tracks its performance and reports it openly and clearly
- Leaders drive change with integrity, purpose and care
- Evidence, feedback and oversight are used to improve outcomes
- Data practices align with Indigenous Data Sovereignty and support Aboriginal self-determination

What this priority means

We will drive whole-of-system change through strong leadership, transparent governance, and shared accountability. This means aligning legislation, policy, and operations — and building the infrastructure to embed that alignment into how decisions are made, tracked, and improved.

A system that works for women must be inclusive, principled, and transparent. That requires leadership that understands the needs of women in custody, governance that centres cultural safety and gender equity, and accountability that supports continuous learning and system improvement.

It also means ensuring that decisions are informed by the voices of those most impacted — especially Aboriginal women and women with lived experience.

Why it matters

System failures in leadership, oversight, and accountability have been repeatedly linked to poor outcomes for women. ^{4, 18–20, 31} When authority is misused or lived experience is excluded, harm increases, and trust erodes.

Inclusive, transparent governance prevents abuse, builds public confidence, and ensures the system evolves based on evidence and feedback — not just compliance. ^{3, 10, 12}

Embedding strong accountability — including Indigenous Data Sovereignty — is key to fair, ethical, and effective service delivery.



Strategic Roadmap: A Phased Approach to Reform

This 10-year Strategy sets out a bold vision: to build a service ecosystem that supports women to live safely, with dignity and purpose — outside the criminal justice system. Achieving this requires staged, system-wide reform driven by strong leadership, solid foundations, and a culture of continuous learning.

Change will be gradual, built through deliberate investment in capability, partnerships, and cultural transformation. CSNSW will deliver biennial implementation plans to turn strategy into action, aligning resources, workforce development, infrastructure, and systems improvement with strategic priorities.

This flexible, focused approach enables progress tracking, adaptation, and learning. Each plan will be co-designed with staff, women, Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations, and community partners, supported by governance, lived experience leadership, and transparent monitoring.

Where needed, funding bids will be developed to ensure initiatives are feasible and sustainable. A high-level roadmap outlines the stages of transformation — from foundational reform to full implementation — embedding a safer, more responsive, and rehabilitative system for women.



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GPO Box 5000
Parramatta NSW 2124
T: 02 8346 1333
E: wau@correctiveservices.nsw.gov.au
W: www.correctiveservices.nsw.gov.au

