

Prisoner rehabilitation involving restorative justice
and voluntary agencies

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Prison Fellowship New Zealand
California Catholic Conference
Los Angeles Sheriff's Department – Corrections
Office of Restorative Justice Trust – Los Angeles
Staff of the Sacramento Sheriff's Department

- I also express my gratitude to the many individuals, too many to list, who made my Churchill Fellowship a life changing experience.
- The views and thoughts contained within this report are mine and mine alone. They are not intended to reflect those of the PSNI.

My Background

As a serving Police Officer within the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) I have had the opportunity to see crime, criminals, victims and the families of both, throughout my Police service.

Time spent as a uniformed Constable followed by a period in the Criminal Investigation Department have given me experience in most areas of crime, the criminals involved and the victims that are left as a consequence.

In more recent times, I have had the opportunity to work within the wider Northern Ireland Criminal Justice arena where contact with agencies including the Court Service, Probation Service, Prison Service and Public Prosecution Service have given a more rounded understanding of the impact that crime has on both the offender, their victims and their respective wider family circles.

Introduction

The issue of Prisons, prisoners, re-offending rates and crime generally is rarely out of the public arena with successive Governments claiming to be ever more ‘tough on crime’.

The increasing UK prisoner population places and will continue to place a substantial financial burden on the UK taxpayer and reasonably raises the question “Can we do things better”?

With the Northern Ireland Prison Service currently responsible for approximately 1450 prisoners at a cost in the region of £82,500 per prisoner place, the financial and human impact of prison confinement is clear.

The scope to consider alternative types of rehabilitation programs and treatments that are identified to be at least as effective and certainly no more expensive than current arrangements for sentenced prisoners should be an area for constant review and consideration.

With the anticipated devolution of Policing and Justice in Northern Ireland, our Politicians and others will be in a uniquely privileged situation to consider the way forward for all areas of our Criminal Justice system.

Prisons and the members of our society who fill them will undoubtedly be considered over the coming months and years. The resultant decisions that are made will have a massive impact on offenders, victims, their respective family circles and the communities they originate from.

Range of Research

The prestigious nature of the WCMT Fellowship afforded many more opportunities for research than I had initially anticipated, however I have sought in this report to concentrate primarily on the 2 main questions that led to my initial application to the Trust:

1. What role, if any, can Restorative Justice programs and principles play in reducing re-offending rates for those who have been sentenced to a custodial period of imprisonment?
2. In light of the costs associated with keeping those we have seen fit to imprison, what role can and does the voluntary / non – profit sector play in reducing these costs associated with running effective rehabilitative programs?

What is Restorative Justice?

The concept of Restorative Justice (RJ) is now well recognised and established within many areas of the Criminal Justice system.

Although promising to deliver much, many in society will consider that current processes, procedures and 'culture' rarely seem to deliver an acceptable outcome to the offender, the victim and the wider community.

Based on principles long established within many cultures, RJ seeks to do more than many would suggest our current Criminal Justice predominantly delivers in its current format.

By seeking to 'restore the balance', 'right the wrong' and 'bring healing to both offender and victim', RJ claims to offer some of the key elements that are absent from the current Criminal Justice mechanisms.

While many aspects of RJ could be highlighted, Harry Mika and Howard Zehr provide ten very useful 'Signposts of Restorative Justice' that summarise the fundamental principles of RJ and act as a benchmark from which various programs can be assessed:

1. Focus on the harms of wrongdoing more than the rules that have been broken.
2. Show equal concern and commitment to victims and offenders, involving both in the process of justice.
3. Work toward the restoration of victims, empowering them and responding to their needs as they see them.
4. Support offenders while encouraging them to understand, accept and carry out their obligations.
5. Recognize that while obligations may be difficult for offenders, they should not be intended as harms and they must be achievable.
6. Provide opportunities for dialogue, direct or indirect, between victims and offenders as appropriate.
7. Involve and empower the affected community through the justice process, and increase its capacity to recognize and respond to community bases of crime.
8. Encourage collaboration and reintegration rather than coercion and isolation.
9. Give attention to the unintended consequences of our actions and programs.
10. Show respect to all parties including victims, offenders and justice colleagues.

The role of voluntary / non-profit groups

Voluntary and non-profit groups contribute much to many areas of life and the various communities and individuals they serve.

Their role within Prisoner rehabilitation and reintegration is perhaps not highlighted as frequently as it should be, however many within the CJ system will recognise that non profit and voluntary groups have a rather unique ability to bring a number of benefits to any initiative including:

- Finances
- Volunteers
- Accommodation
- Employment opportunities
- Resources
- Role models

These benefits are fundamental to many of the issues associated with Prisoner rehabilitation, resettlement and reintegration, victims and families affected by crime.

New Zealand Research

Time in New Zealand allowed for several visits, meetings and discussions with numerous interested parties.

Although I have concentrated my thoughts on 4 main aspects of my New Zealand research, I briefly make comment on other areas that I had opportunity to investigate and consider.

Initially attending a 4-day Prisons conference, it was an honour to hear amongst others Baroness Vivien Stern and Professor Andrew Coyle deal with several Prison and Prisoner related topics.

The rather tongue in cheek presentation of Principal Youth Court Judge Mr Andrew Becroft on *'How to turn a young offender into an adult criminal in 10 easy steps'* is equally compelling when applied to adults beginning a possible journey towards criminality:

1. Ignore the risk factors.
2. Always arrest young people when they offend for the first time – always be disrespectful.
3. Treat all young offenders as if they were the same.
4. Always charge and bring the young person to Court.
5. 'Sideline' the young offender at the youth conference and run it badly.
6. Always enter a 'conviction' on the young offenders record.
7. Make no allowance for age at sentencing, 'adult time for adult crime'.
8. Give young offenders a short sharp shock.

9. Segregate young offenders from their families, communities and victims and aggregate them together in prison.
10. If all else fails, do what works, but deliver it badly.

Time with the 'National Advisor for volunteers' for the New Zealand Department of Corrections was of tremendous benefit and interest and worthy of its own report.

Prison Fellowship New Zealand

Prison Fellowship is an International Association with over 100 National Organisations.

These National organisations are indigenous to their own Countries, are volunteer-based and although Prison Fellowship (PF) is very much 'Faith' based in its outlook, its membership is trans denominational with it obtaining support and volunteers from across the many Christian groups within society.

While in New Zealand I had opportunity to look at three distinct areas of work that PF are involved in.

- **Sycamore Tree Project**

The Sycamore Tree project is a Restorative Justice conference, which brings 6 sentenced prisoners and 6 community participants together over 8 sessions of 2 hours each.

The community participants are not the specific victims associated with the crimes of the offenders taking part in the RJ Conference; however they all bring their own experiences of crime and its consequences to the group discussions.

Using the story of 'Zacchaeus' from the Bible, volunteer coordinators use the 8 sessions to draw out lessons on crime, its effect on victims and the need for restitution on the part of the offender.

PF provides the volunteer coordinators with appropriate training prior to their leading the sessions.

A graduation ceremony at the end of the program allows family members / supporters of the offender to attend and gain an understanding of the program which the offender has completed, to confirm their intention to support the offender on release from prison and to be assured that the offender has at least commenced the journey towards taking responsibility for his / her actions and addressing their offending behaviour.

Within New Zealand, the Department of Corrections covers approximately one third of the costs associated with these Sycamore tree RJ conferences with PF raising the additional two thirds of the funding through its own efforts as well as identifying the volunteers for the sessions.

- **Operation Jericho**

Operation Jericho is a 'Reintegration Mentoring Scheme' and seeks to prepare and then settle an offender who is leaving Prison back into a community.

A volunteer mentor identified by Prison Fellowship begins to work with the offender some 3 to 4 months prior to their anticipated release date.

The mentor, perhaps for the first time in the life of the offender, provides a caring, responsible and non judgemental role model and begins to bring the much needed 'outside perspective' to the life of the offender.

The disposition of Faith groups and the individuals associated with them to volunteer and provide this type of caring mentor and role model is probably well recognised.

The Department of Corrections within New Zealand can say that some 85% of all their approved volunteers come from a Faith based group of some description, although many offer non-faith / religious based programs and activities.

The high profile of PF within New Zealand makes their task of securing suitable volunteers in sufficient quantities reasonably viable and demonstrates the resource capabilities that can be sourced from volunteer groups for specific programs and initiatives.

- **Targeted Community**

Part of the work of PF is not only to see Prisoners within custody assisted and rehabilitated but very much to ensure long term and effective reintegration into local communities.

The need for 'after care' on release from Prison is recognised by many Government agencies; however, those released from custody frequently seem to fall through the gaps of responsibility of the various criminal justice agencies.

The targeted community approach seeks to place a released prisoner, now a member of the public whose debt to society has been paid, into an environment conducive to reintegration and relapse prevention.

These 'receiving communities', primarily faith orientated although this is not essential to the principal, are willing partners in the person's efforts to reintegrate and continue their rehabilitation.

A prisoner walking out of the gates of prison, perhaps after a lengthy stay and with little if any family support, can look to their new 'community' as identified and prepared by PF to assist them with, or least provide guidance on, a number of issues including:

- Finances
- Accommodation
- Employment
- A family orientated influence
- Child care provision
- Good role models
- Practical support
- Social opportunities
- New friends

This willing support mechanism may well be the difference between relapse, reconviction and re-imprisonment and the successful journey to a crime free life.

This additional support afforded to those leaving Prisons and entering back into society is at no extra cost to the Government or Criminal Justice agencies and highlights one of the many ways that voluntary groups and their initiatives can help 'plug the gaps' in wider efforts to address re-offending.

- **Rimutaka Prison – Unit 7**

Unit 7 of the Rimutaka Prison is a 60-bed unit from where the prisoners undertake the Prison fellowship 'Faith Based' program.

This program lasts for between 18 to 24 months and demonstrates the potential for any joint Government and voluntary group project or initiative.

During my time at Unit 7 I had the opportunity to speak at length to a number of those who were undertaking the program and seek their own views on both the Unit itself and the Faith based program associated with it.

I found their individual comments, even at this early stage of my research to be quite remarkable; however, only after having spoken to a number of other Offenders in other Prisons, programs and jurisdictions later in my research would the full impact of these discussions become clear.

- ❖ One 38 year old male with 9 previous prison terms totalling over 18 years made the following observations about his time in Unit 7:
 - An opportunity like nowhere else I have encountered.
 - I was a career criminal but won't be back – the first time I have ever said that.
 - The Unit offers an environment for change.
 - There is no 'Us and Them'.
 - I have the opportunity to look at myself.

- ❖ A second offender with over 400 convictions for domestic burglary stated that:
 - The Unit was the best (of 11) that he had ever been confined in.
 - It offered a safe and comfortable environment to address his offending.
 - The removal from the Unit of those not interested in rehabilitation led to a culture of change and progress.

The direct involvement of PF New Zealand in running the program within Unit 7 clearly brought a change of ethos that impacted on both the Prison staff and the offenders.

With over 150 volunteers involved with the Unit, the sense of normality, so far as ever possible in a Prison context, is maintained.

The constant interaction between these members of the public and those incarcerated brings a reminder that the outside world is worthy of the effort required on the part of those undertaking the program to ensure they leave Prison with a greatly reduced likelihood of re-offending.

'Te Pirita' - Child sex offender treatment Unit

I am grateful to Principal Psychologist Jim Van Rensburg and his staff at 'Te Pirita', child sex offender treatment unit for their time and hospitality.

While the specific impact of the Cognitive behaviour therapy of this specialised treatment unit is not included in this report I mention briefly that the treatment unit itself benefits from a 60 bed therapeutic environment.

This separation of general population prisoners into a therapeutic environment has already been mentioned as appearing to offer a rather unique opportunity for Prisoners to deal effectively with whatever their particular area of offending and re-offending needs to be addressed.

The most notable aspect of the treatment programme within this facility however relating to my own research was the aspect of what many would describe as a 'Family conference'.

As the offender moves through the treatment program, they are required to take ownership and responsibility for their actions including the impact on their victims and wider family.

As the time of release from custody approaches, the offender meets with members of their family, key interested persons and Unit staff to pave the way back into the community.

The highly emotive and often highly destructive nature of the type of offending by those who end up in the 'Te Pirita' unit, requires sensitive handling by the reintegration workers and Unit staff but facilitated and controlled contact between the offender and interested persons can resolve many of the underlying fears, anger and concerns that exist prior to release back into society.

Sensible Sentencing Trust

The Sensible Sentencing Trust (SST) has grown steadily in recognition within New Zealand and it campaigns for 'sensible' although not necessarily 'harsher' penalties at the point of sentencing.

As well as the sentencing aspect of any Court procedure, SST also seeks to secure greater consideration for the victims of crime, who are admitted by many to be frequently forgotten in the aftermath of the crime and then as the Judicial process moves forward.

With the majority of my time spent with more sympathetic and progressive voices associated with the Criminal Justice system, an opportunity to meet with and subsequently highlight the concerns of SST and those that they represent hopefully brings some sense of balance to my report.

With Politicians and Policy makers ever mindful of public opinion, the views of SST would not be considered by many within society to be extreme.

Their quoted examples of released offenders who go on to commit horrendous crimes highlight many of the deep rooted fears of many members of the public who consider that any relaxation in sentencing periods will only lead to greater crime and victimisation.

While my report has not detailed specific Statistics associated with any of the programs that I had opportunity to research, SST would be quick to point out that even the 'most effective' rehabilitation programs are based on the reconviction rate of previous offenders with the statistics not including either those detected but not convicted or indeed those who re-offend but are not detected or reported to the Police.

The difficulties associated with using these 'reconviction' statistics to generate support from a sceptical public is clear and requires a careful and honest representation of any figures presented to the wider public as evidence of successful rehabilitative programs.

While conversation with the SST touched on many issues, I was encouraged that the role of restorative justice and the place of victim – offender conferencing was recognised as a valuable tool within the Criminal Justice arena.

The key points raised by SST in relation to any victim - offender contact are worthy of consideration albeit not necessarily held or thought to be essential aspects of victim – offender conferencing:

- Contact should be victim initiated.
- Offenders must not be empowered as part of the process.
- Victims must be in control of the situation.
- Contact should be post conviction to prevent 'plea bargaining' at sentencing.

- Contact just before release from custody can be a valuable tool in preventing unexpected contact between victims and offenders, neither of whom may be well prepared for the situation.

While the views of SST may be discounted by many who are seeking to move the entire topic of Prisons and offenders forward, their mere existence highlights the need to capture the hearts, minds and confidence of the general public in any effort to see major reform within any area of the Criminal Justice arena which touches on offender sentencing and victim impact.

United States of America

MERIT

The MERIT program is a program run within the Jails of the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department in partnership with the Hacienda La Puente Unified School District and consists of 3 rehabilitative programs: IMPACT, US Veterans and Bridges to recovery.

With 2 possible interpretations – 'Men Encountering Recovery through In custody Training' or 'Maximising Education, Reaching Individual Transformation', the goal of the MERIT program is well represented by the vision to see offenders recover from their offending behaviour and its impact on their lives, and then move on to encounter at least some level of transformation within their own and consequently their families lives.

IMPACT is a drug rehabilitation program with the offender ordered to attend by the Court as part of their sentence. Ranging from a custody portion of between 14 to 90 days, the offender initially participates in the program while in custody before being released to continue their drug treatment in any one of a number of drug treatment facilities.

The US Veterans is designed for military veterans and amongst other topics deals with issues such as life skills, anger management, drug issues, and career orientated preparations such as CV writing and application skills.

Bridges to Recovery is a domestic violence program that can be ordered by the Court, referred onto by friends or members of a family or volunteered to be undertaken by the prisoners themselves.

Topics such as anger management, parenting skills, relationship skills, sex education and drug rehabilitation are all tailored to address the domestic violence issues held by the participant.

These three separate programs are all delivered under the MERIT banner by qualified teaching staff and the opportunity to spend time within these classes was certainly a highlight of my research period.

The unusual and initially uneasy opportunity to ask questions, receive answers and be questioned by a group of some 150 assembled prisoners was not a prospect I would

have relished before leaving Northern Ireland, however this and similar direct contact with those experiencing Custody first hand have become some of the most impactful and indeed cherished experiences of my Churchill fellowship.

Although in practical terms MERIT doesn't benefit from an ideal set of circumstances with no segregation from other offenders and no opportunity for victims / offenders to meet, the program nevertheless offers substantial quantities of offenders the chance to benefit from rehabilitative classes and a chance to examine their offending behaviour.

The self esteem generated by attending what would be for many their first graduation ceremony and the additional support of an 'Alumni' when released from custody, are all key factors raised by participants themselves as strengthening the likely success of the MERIT program.

The USA generally, and California specifically are not well recognised as 'leaders' in Correctional reform and certainly received less than favourable press from New Zealand contacts as they heard of my intention to look at some initiatives within the State of California.

Despite the bad press, MERIT (and other programs within California) all demonstrated what was clearly a start at least of a change in mindset of a number of key personnel within the Correctional system.

Despite their struggling with constant overcrowding, funding pressures and sheer weight of massive numbers, I constantly encountered Los Angeles Sheriff's staff, professional instructors and volunteers who were all working hard to make a very imperfect system more humane, provide better and more effective rehabilitative programs and generally improve prisoner conditions.

GOGI

GOGI – 'Getting out by going in' is a non-profit organisation founded by 'Coach' Marie Taylor and based within California.

The privilege to meet with Coach Taylor on a number of occasions and then to be granted access to a group of 24 females undergoing the GOGI programme was another of the many highlights of my Churchill Fellowship.

Visited while running within the Century Regional Detention Facility (CRDF) in Los Angeles, GOGI recognises that the period of imprisonment is an opportunity, perhaps the only opportunity, for some individuals to find their own internal freedom despite being incarcerated behind locked doors.

Based on the content of Coach Taylor's book 'Prison; Getting out by going in – freedom before release' GOGI is based on RapidChange Therapy (RCT) techniques; however few who undertake the programme will give much attention to or even care what the science behind the method is.

With the simple, albeit frequently elusive goal of seeing recidivism reduced, GOGI offers its participants simple tools to enable them to move from their past behaviours and destructive activities to a life marked by positive decisions and choices.

Designed to help participants “Get Out” of their old behaviour by “Going In” both physically as a result of incarceration but also emotionally within themselves for self-improvement, the programme empowers the individual with information, opportunity and then continued support for lasting change.

Operating on the ‘total immersion’ principal, participants are removed from the normal prison environment, build meaningful relationships with other participants, benefit from frequent volunteer input into the programme, and are then supported on release by a GOGI alumni.

Like many of the more recent rehabilitative and recidivism reduction programmes I had the opportunity to look at, GOGI has yet to be subjected to a full and impartial analysis of its success rates.

Despite this, all the anecdotal evidence suggested that GOGI holds tremendous hope for not only those who undertake the programme but also for a Correctional system struggling to cope with vast numbers and in many instances, embarrassing reconviction rates for those who have been subject to a time in Jail or Prison.

The official success of GOGI within the CRDF facility will undoubtedly pave the way for future expansion of the programme and should set the benchmark for other programs seeking to provide rehabilitative and reintegration services to those who are subject to imprisonment.

Office of Restorative Justice Trust

The Office of Restorative Justice Trust (RJT) is a Catholic based ministry which seeks to provide pastoral and practical care for those in Prison, their families and victims.

Sitting within the remit of the California Catholic Conference, an institution that represents the Catholic Bishops and their dioceses, the practical care of the RJT is supplemented by efforts to address and change public policy regarding imprisonment both via their own efforts and also by their association with the Catholic Conference.

Time spent with Father George Horan, the senior Catholic chaplain for the LA County Men's Central Jail was exceptional and forged what I'm sure will be a lasting friendship.

A period of approximately 10 days with Father Horan included:

- The role and importance of Prison Chaplaincy
- ‘One on one’ interviews with offenders
- Work of the religious and volunteer services of Men’s Central Jail – L.A.

- Criminal and Gang Members Anonymous program at Mule Creek State Prison
- ‘PREP’ – Partnership for re-entry program
- Stark Juvenile Justice Centre
- Numerous other initiatives to assist Prisoners, victims and the families of both.

The programs, efforts and selfless work of the staff of the RJT are vast and again are a very practical example of the extensive benefits that volunteers and the Faith based community bring to the question of imprisonment.

Many of their efforts might well struggle to secure any, or certainly substantial funding from the traditional central government departments.

Despite this, their tireless efforts to address the needs of those in the prison, the wives, husbands and partners left on the outside and the countless children who serve the same length of sentence as that of their father or mother are factors which are rarely captured as part of the wider influences assisting with crime reduction.

Homeboy Industries

Time in Los Angeles allowed for a number of visits to Homeboy Industries including an opportunity to meet with its founder, Father Greg Boyle.

Situated in Downtown Los Angeles, the mission and ethos of Homeboy Industries is well communicated under its motto of ‘Jobs not Jails’.

Existing to help at-risk and former gang-involved youth to move away from gang activity, the many areas of Homeboy industries are all geared to assist with rehabilitation and enable those involved in the work to become crime free and contributing members of society.

Raising its finances from a number of sources including foundation grants, City and County support, private donors, fundraising events and profit from its ‘industries’, the opportunities for employment and services offered by Homeboy Industries are extensive but include:

- Educational courses
- Mental health program
- Legal services program
- Free visible tattoo removal
- Court-ordered Community service opportunities
- Employment counselling
- Employment opportunities in:
 - Bakery
 - Café
 - Landscaping and maintenance
 - Merchandise
 - Printing press

- Silkscreen printing

The impact of preventing an offender / at risk of offending individual from slipping into Gang membership, drug addiction and the associated offences that follow should not be lost on those seeking to see crime reduced, fewer victims and better lives for both the prospective offender and their families.

Homeboy is an enviable example of the exciting possibilities for change that partnership working between the Faith community, Government and the volunteer sector can bring to problems at the grass roots level.

4 main findings

My time looking at aspects of Prisons, prisoners and post release initiatives has given much in the way of new experiences, learning, friendship and challenged many of my own views and opinions.

I recognise the need for others with more practical knowledge and educational expertise to take forward any new and formal initiatives to address re-offending; however I feel it appropriate to mention 4 of the main factors that I would be seeking to see included in any prisoner initiative.

- **Segregated programs**

The term 'segregation' may initially raise concerns of racial separation, limiting or reducing contact between prisoners and staff or even just equality issues highlighted by how the segregation is put into effect practically however these unconnected issues should not be used as barriers to provide the proper atmosphere for prison programs.

Programs that seek to remove participants from 'general population' and place them within an environment of mutual support, understanding, opportunity and enthused correctional staff were found to be well received and supported by those undertaking the various initiatives that I had opportunity to examine.

By being freed from the many difficulties and pressures associated with Prison, offenders seeking the opportunity to address the underlying causes of their behaviour are more likely to build friendships and relationships with others of the same mind.

Less likely to encounter violence, drug pressures and the need to pursue gang affiliation, the protection offered by a segregated and therapeutic environment appear key to giving maximum chance of success to custody programs.

There is of course a cost associated with providing more suitable accommodation and facilities for those undertaking programs in a segregated environment. Despite this however, the prospect of a reduced re-offending rate and associated cost benefits of a reduction in crime must be factored into the decision making process.

The phrase 'Invest to save' is often quoted as part of internal decision-making processes affecting just one organisation. Only if the same reasoning is applied to and

across many of the Criminal Justice organisations which deal with Prisoners, victims and crime can the true benefit of more targeted and expensive segregated programs be realised and justified.

- **Voluntary input**

Professional, highly trained and salaried staff who provide targeted prisoner programs will always be essential to the rehabilitative efforts of any Prison authority but their role is not the only one that can impact upon prisoner reform.

A voluntary input at Prisons, whether by the specific contribution of offering rehabilitative oriented courses or just by bringing some sense of normality and every day life to the rigid routine of prison should never be underestimated.

Contact with those undergoing their term of imprisonment highlighted the very human need to have meaningful contact with others both from within and outside the custodial environment.

Concerns associated with allowing volunteers' access to prisoners and prison programs on a 'security' or contraband argument were never raised by prison staff who had responsibility for this area from both New Zealand and the USA.

Stated examples of volunteers acting inappropriately were almost non-existent with the few issues that did arise frequently resulting from a genuine lack of knowledge or misunderstanding from the volunteer perspective.

The mental benefit to an imprisoned person, knowing that someone has sufficient genuine concern to visit, interact, talk or provide programs or pastimes for them is hard to quantify but was frequently cited by prisoners themselves as being extremely powerful.

The 'throw away the key' mentality is hopefully a mindset of the past for those who are directly involved with Prisons and Criminal Justice matters. Perhaps the real challenge now is to educate the public and prospective volunteer base of the benefits that volunteering within prison establishments can bring to those serving sentences prior to their release back into local communities.

- **Resettlement strategy**

The need to not only prepare the offender for their release from prison, but ensure an adequate provision of funding and resources to see them properly resettled into a Community should be clear.

It should also be noted that in order to maximise the likelihood of proper resettlement and a crime free (or at least crime reduced) life might require the opportunity for the

released person to settle within a different community to that from which they came prior to detention.

The provision of funding and the resources required to organise a successful resettlement strategy, possibly in a different area, as suggested above, from will undoubtedly pose difficult questions, certainly surrounding funding and supervision responsibilities.

While the 'throw away the key' attitude may now be a thing of the past, even if only prompted by the crippling cost implications, the 'lock them up and then throw them out' practice is one, which requires reasoned consideration.

Individual agencies will undoubtedly seek to fulfil their role and remit for Offenders at each stage of their involvement with the Justice System but it is at the point of release that the 'joined up' approach perhaps most needs to be perfected.

On release from custody, the competing priorities for Police, Probation services, housing, welfare provision, Prison staff and other interested agencies can frequently allow an individual to fall through the gaps of the provision that should be, and perhaps even is, there to assist them.

A structured, joined up and properly financed reintegration program is key to maximising the benefit of any 'In custody' rehabilitation that has already occurred.

While many individuals will not require dedicated assistance in the area of reintegration, the targeting of resources and efforts towards those believed most likely to struggle on release and therefore be more likely to re-offend can have marked benefits.

- **Alumni or Aftercare group**

Many of those who have found themselves imprisoned and subsequently released may well be of the opinion that the last thing they would want is any kind of continued contact with those who have struggled with similar problems.

While this may be the case generally, for those who have undergone a specific in custody program and rehabilitation process, the ability to continue their involvement with any program on release is worthy of consideration.

Although perhaps associated more with the USA, the term Alumni is used by a number of Custody based programs purely to highlight the existence of care, support and continued opportunity for rehabilitation once a person has been released.

The extension of a custody based program for a period of time post release, or even just the facilitated involvement with a suitable support group or agency, was raised by many I had the opportunity to speak with during my Fellowship.

The difficulties encountered by some, perhaps the majority, of released prisoners should not be underestimated and the role of support groups may well provide much needed assistance and reassurance.

The linking together of a reintegration strategy, utilisation of volunteers and continued support by an alumni / support group produces a package that gives a realistic opportunity to impact re-offending rates.

Prisoner Rehabilitation and the Police

A Churchill Fellowship is rightly portrayed as an ‘opportunity of a lifetime’ and the unique access to Prisons, Prisoners, rehabilitative Programs and key professionals from several different disciplines, specialities and viewpoints has certainly led to much soul searching on a personal level as I reviewed my own service as a Police Officer.

Financial cut backs, ever increasing demands on resources and the growing ‘professionalism’ of criminals will place a strain on Policing and associated Criminal Justice partners to an extent yet to be fully appreciated.

The now common phrase of ‘Do more with less’ is the mantra within many Criminal Justice Agencies and may well prove to be the very catalyst to spark a new approach and new attitude to offenders and offending behaviour, not least within Policing.

The phrase of one seasoned offender I spoke to at length within a USA Prison has lost none of its impact on me despite the passing of time;

“The Police could be a bit more helpful too”

This turn of phrase perhaps sums up the attitude of many who have ‘done their time’ but face renewed contact with the Police on their release.

The idea that Police might actually play an active role in rehabilitation and support on the release of those they have previously detected for crime, seen convicted and then imprisoned may well seem fanciful, however, it is not inconceivable.

The importance of Police attitudes during the crucial contact that they will have with those they have previously dealt with is certainly worthy of consideration at all levels of Policing.

The current target driven environment that Policing finds itself shackled within is far from conducive to progressing rehabilitative opportunities and their associated risks.

If Policing is to become intrinsically linked to offender rehabilitation and not just offender detection, it may well require a new direction and a new consideration of the issues.

I look forward to playing my part in that future possibility.