



“A Word from the CEO”

Leigh Garrett

The Government has started to reshape its thinking about crime and justice policy and a number of documents have been released by the Minister for Justice Reform, the Hon John Rau MP, over recent months which we believe are aimed at achieving sensible and balanced reform outcomes. Firstly, it will continue to strengthen the rights of victims, a matter in which our organisation is vitally concerned and very supportive. Secondly, it will provide opportunities for a broader array of sentencing options for people who offend, hopefully many of which will see sentences for people who have committed lower level offences able to be served in the community. Another matter of critical concern to OARS SA. It will also begin to reduce the costs of the system and hopefully make justice more accessible.

The Justice Reform Discussion Paper about sentencing, which we anticipate will consolidate the conversation about these matters, has not yet been published, but we hope that it will articulate a range of options that will improve rehabilitation and restoration and, at the same time, reduce the cost of incarceration. Imprisonment is a very blunt instrument, and we would be the first to concede that for some offenders incarceration is essential. But not all people who offend require this level of intervention.

The critical issue is getting the balancing point at which victims and the broader community are protected and rehabilitation opportunities are maximised. OARS SA has always sought to have a balanced view and our work in restorative justice over many years seeks to find new pathways to repair the harm to victims that result from crime and assist them in their healing. It can be very difficult for this balance point to be achieved. It is our view that over the last few decades this balance point has shifted too far in favour of incarceration.

It is very clear that prisons in South Australia are overcrowded. SA is no orphan across the country in this respect. All across Australia we have seen numbers of people in prison explode. It is our view that the cost of this is unsustainable. As prisons become overcrowded they become less effective at achieving rehabilitation outcomes and it is to this matter that providing safe options for community sentencing will be a major advance. As long as safety can be reasonably assured and as long as Government adequately funds support and accountability measures for community based sentences, it our view that this is the best outcome for South Australians.

We look forward to viewing and providing comment on this vital discussion paper.

Leigh

Our Vision!

OUR MISSION:

Reduce social harm by strengthening communities and social inclusion through the provision of restorative justice services, high quality treatment and rehabilitation services, support and advocacy, at critical transition points.

OUR VISION:

Strong communities with positive social connections underpinned by restorative practices.

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Social Justice
Restorative Justice
Community Participation
Human Rights
Continuous Improvement
Advocacy
Prison as a Last Resort.

Our Services

Supportive Accommodation Services
Drug & Alcohol Counselling & Comorbidity
Support for individuals and families,
Including
Advocacy & Referral
Circles of Support & Accountability
Gambling Support Service
Therapeutic Courts Treatment Services
Emergency Financial Assistance
Christmas Toy Program
Centre for Restorative Justice
Cadell Bus
Yatala Gatehouse Services
Book Shop

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Newsletter June 2015

The purpose of this newsletter is to keep members and supporters updated on the events at OARS Community Transitions.

We have many experiences to tell you about and have selected a few to share with you.

We also want to take this opportunity to ask you to consider making a donation to our organisation to support our clients and services during this winter season.

The OARS Board comprises:

Annabel Shinkfield (Chair)
Wayne Turner
Robin English
Michael Faraonio
Chris O'Grady
Greg Pattinson
Leigh Garrett (CEO)

The CT Board comprises:

Annabel Shinkfield (Chair)
Tim Tonkin (Deputy Chair)
Dr Helen Paige
Steven Todd
Virginia Pittingale
Leigh Garrett (CEO)



Annabel Shinkfield, Chair

Dear Members and Supporters

The continuing implementation of the challenging 14/15 State and Federal Budgets has seen us lose funding for our pre-employment program and part of our funding for our Emergency Assistance Program. We have, however, been grateful for the continuation of funding for a number of core programs, as well as the initiation of a progressive program aimed at reducing recidivism of released sexual offenders. Attracting surprisingly balanced public reaction, and some positive media, we are excited about what this program may mean for offenders committed to change and the community concerned for the safety of its vulnerable members.

We have been heartened to have a number of fresh and productive conversations with politicians and senior public servants who are motivated to find sustainable justice and corrections practices, as the financial strain of South Australia's crime and justice policy over the last 2 decades becomes increasingly untenable. Now is a time to demonstrate, clearly and with a weight of compelling evidence, that the programs that OARS is uniquely placed to deliver can provide cost-effective services, improved community safety, significantly reduced recidivism and a financially attractive alternative to current approaches.

It was a great pleasure to see the re-opening of the Boomgate at Yatala. On Opening Day, a number of Board members attended to assist with the barbecue (including some grateful consumption) and to observe the value OARS can provide to the stressed, sometimes distraught, visitors to the inmates. It was heartening to see how staff and volunteers compassionately supported those in need; providing advice and guidance to those facing a daunting and at times overwhelming experience.

At Board, we continue to capitalise on the many skills of the members to make robust strategic decisions to support our sustainable position. We have seen a year of tight fiscal control that will see OARS achieve its best financial position in some time, in spite of the huge funding and cost pressures it faces. We commend the CEO for his discipline, creativity, unwavering dedication and passion in steering OARS into a position of strength for the new financial year ahead.

Warm regards,
Annabel Shinkfield
Chair

UPDATE ON OUR PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

OARS COMMUNITY TRANSITIONS endeavours to provide an array of creative, compassionate and relevant services for its clients. A brief list is included on the back of this brochure. We have pleasure in providing this half-yearly update for your information.

- After an extended period of closure the **Yatala Family Centre (Boomgate)** has reopened. We have welcomed a number of new volunteers who have become part of the 'Boomgate' team. Training has been provided by experienced staff and the new recruits are shadowing staff and other experienced volunteers.
- On March 27th **two Restorative Justice Forums** were held - one for Community Leaders (held at Parliament House) and another for School Teachers. **Chris Straker** from the UK spoke about his experiences in reshaping the community in Hull to improve schools, student outcomes and community conflict resolution. We hope it will provide a platform for future policy reform in education, criminal justice and community development.
- We continue to provide **Restorative Training** for Schools and other organisations.
- We have been pleased to have news of **funding 'rollovers'** for most of our programs and the teams are already planning for future programs/services to enhance our service delivery to clients. Unfortunately we also learnt that we had been unsuccessful in being refunded to provide the **Police Drug Diversion Program (PDDI)**. OARS has had a long association with delivering this service to clients and the PDDI workers that have provided the service in Murray Bridge and Berri are to be congratulated on their participation in a challenging Program.
- A decision was made to close the **Murray Bridge Branch** and a lunch was held to honour the long standing Members - Marj Byerlee, Barbara Haines, Patsy Freak and John McKenzie - to thank them for their volunteer work, donations and support over many years. The Murray Bridge Branch has been continuously serving the prisoners at Mobilong and their families since the prison was opened in 1987.
- A new Program for sex offenders has been funded by the Dept of Correctional Services. Known as **'Circles of Support and Accountability' (COSA)**, it assists individuals to re-enter society, develop constructive and pro-social strategies and solutions to everyday problems, and challenge behaviours and attitudes that may be associated with the offending cycle.
- **Drug and Alcohol Treatment Services (DaATS)** - Our one-to-one counselling service continues to assist clients and we have re-commenced a Drug Awareness Group for clients who are in the pre-contemplative stage of change. The DaATS team also completed **SMART Recovery** training in March 2015 to enable the team to facilitate this new program in Cadell Prison. Other groups currently run by our team include: Moral Reconciliation Therapy; Staying Quit; Relapse Prevention; Drug Awareness; Domestic Violence Abuse Prevention; and Safe Relationships.
- We are also about to **pilot a school-based drug education program**. Facilitation of the drug education sessions will commence on 15th June 2015. If you are interested in speaking to us about tailoring a program for your school or organisation on a fee for service basis, please contact Dot Stagg.
- The Team Leaders joined the Senior Executive Team at a **strategic planning day in March**. We are constantly reviewing programs and exploring new ideas to continuously improve our services. These ideas will be used to formulate our next strategic plan.
- **Gambling Support Services** - our Team continues working specifically with Problem Gamblers with a unique criminogenic focus. We provide outreach counselling to Yatala, Mobilong, The Pre-Release Centre and the Adelaide Remand Centre. We have been delighted to see some outstanding outcomes for some of these clients.
- **Pt Augusta** - Rose Mill commenced as the new Senior Case Worker in March 2015. Rose has extensive experience as a tenancy officer and with DCS in Pt Augusta. Jess Hammer joined her as a Case Worker in April. During visits to the Mid North area, senior staff took the opportunity to network with services both in Port Augusta and Port Pirie.
- **Pt Lincoln Hostel** - The Senior Case Worker continues to regularly network in the local area, with services such as DCS, St Vincent DePaul, Pt Lincoln Aboriginal Health, Pt Lincoln Mental Health Service, and Pt Lincoln Community Housing. St Vincent DePaul donated new curtains, furniture for the lounge room and some bedding, all in excellent condition. Lack of Affordable exit-point housing continues to prove difficult, however it should be noted that in July-Dec 2014, 50% of the 22 clients who exited the Pt Lincoln Hostel moved into Private Rental Accommodation.
- **Berri** - The Hostel has seen new residents engaging in community activities, which have included cleaning 'pool cars' at Life Without Barriers, and another has commenced voluntary work. 2 clients at the Hostel for less than 1 month have successfully exited into Private Rental accommodation in the local area. Another client has engaged in a TAFE course.
- The six month **Mobilong Book Club (Dad's Reading Group)** ceased in April 2015. It provided support for Prisoners who wish to improve their reading and comprehension skills. Funding is not currently available to continue this program at the moment.
- Many agencies, including OARS, are experiencing a shortfall in **Emergency Assistance Funding** from DSS. The loss of funds at our Morphett Street Office will have a significant impact on recently released and homeless clients on bail, parole or home detention. Referral pathways have been negotiated with 4 major emergency relief providers within the CBD. All agencies are sympathetic and very supportive of our client group, despite their own significant decrease in funding.
- The **Comorbidity** Project Worker completed the bi-annual Staff Skill Audit Report for the Drug & Alcohol Treatment Services Team (DaATS) and Supportive Accommodation Service staff, as well as the bi-annual Peer File Audit Report for the DaATS Program. The Dual Diagnosis Capable Advanced Treatment tool was facilitated to assess the DaATS program's ability to work with clients who have complex needs. The Professional Practice Guidelines & Comorbidity Best Practice Manual continue to be reviewed & updated.
- Our **Pre-Employment Program** has ceased following the announcement made by the Govt in April regarding changes to the Job Services Australia industry. We sadly said farewell Penny Lahainer, our Pre-Employment Consultant, who has been successful in securing alternative employment.