

**Submission
No 4**

SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN OF IMPRISONED PARENTS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Prison Fellowship Australia

Date Received: 25 February 2020

25 Feb 2020

**Committee on Children and Young People
Parliament of New South Wales
6 Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000**

SENT VIA EMAIL - childrenyoungpeople@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Attention: The Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox MLC - Committee Chair

**SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN OF IMPRISONED PARENTS IN NEW SOUTH WALES
SUBMISSION – PRISON FELLOWSHIP AUSTRALIA NSW**

Dear Mr Mason-Cox MLC,

We refer to your email of 28 January 2020 in relation to the inquiry into Support for Children of Imprisoned Parents in New South Wales being conducted by the Committee on Children and Young People which is closing on Friday 28 February 2020.

Prison Fellowship Australia NSW have submitted a contribution in part via the Family Matters Strategy Committee as part of the Corrective Services CFOSC - Children and Families of Offenders Steering Committee. This related to our Visitor Information Volunteer Scheme (VIVS).

However, as a separate submission, please find attached details which highlight the activity and impact on children of imprisoned parents through our Angel Tree & Camp for Kids Programmes.

Please contact me if you require further details.

Yours sincerely,



**Peter J. Abood JP
State Manger – NSW/ACT**

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SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN OF IMPRISONED PARENTS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

SUBMISSION – PRISON FELLOWSHIP AUSTRALIA NSW/ACT

Prison Fellowship Australia (PFA) NSW/ACT has submitted a contribution in part via the Family Matters Strategy Committee as part of the Corrective Services CFOSC - Children and Families of Offenders Steering Committee. That submission related to our Visitor Information Volunteer Scheme (VIVS).

The submission below highlights the activity and impact on children of imprisoned parents through two additional programs conducted by PFA:

1. Angel Tree
2. Camp for Kids

ANGEL TREE

What is Angel Tree?

Angel Tree® is a program of Prison Fellowship International, provided locally by PFA NSW/ACT by providing prisoners the opportunity to 'give' a Christmas gift to their child(ren). PFA NSW/ACT partners with churches across the State in order to demonstrate love and compassion to children and families in need, assisting to restore damaged child-parent relationships through the separation caused by imprisonment.

PFA receives Angel Tree applications from inmates from July - October. During November Angel Tree gift requests are allocated to churches who, in turn, purchase and deliver the gifts.

Each church appoints an Angel Tree Coordinator; who must have a current Working with Children Check and ensure the church complies with child safety requirements.

The gifts given to children at Christmas are sometimes the only gifts they receive and they bring significant joy to the families involved.

Inmates are eager to participate in Angel Tree as the benefit to them and their family is clear and easy to understand. Angel Tree often provides a basis of trust with inmates which can lead to inmates seeking to engage with other Prison Fellowship programs.

Breaking the cycle of crime

In 2012, research conducted by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare indicated that 28% of new inmates had at least one child dependent on them for their basic needs. With the upward trend of incarcerations in NSW, upward of 3000 children have a vital caretaker "ripped" from their lives each year with some terrible consequences:

“The number of children experiencing parental imprisonment is increasing in Western industrialized countries. Parental imprisonment is a risk factor for child antisocial behaviour, offending, mental health problems, drug abuse, school failure, and unemployment.”

Today’s children of inmates are in danger of becoming tomorrow’s inmates unless we give them hope for their future. Angel Tree is a powerful program that reaches inmates’ children with love and compassion during this painful period of separation. As a result of Angel Tree, these children experience joy – not just from the gifts, but from knowing their mother or father has not forgotten them.

CAMP FOR KIDS

What is Camp for Kids

For 20 years, PFA NSW/ACT has offered an annual camp for children and teenagers who have a parent in prison – fully funded by PFA donors and philanthropic supporters.

Children often feel the stigma and shame of having Mum or Dad (or both) in prison and regularly choose to bear this burden without sharing it with their peers or other trusted adults.

Camp for Kids brings together children in similar situations with PFA volunteers for a five day camping program that is engaging, encouraging and supportive. Camp for Kids encourages the development of each participant’s mind, body and spirit, including activities such as art and crafts, archery, field sports, quad bikes, creating music, videos and talent shows.

Like all PFA programs that involve children, volunteers are trained in child safety and have current Working with Children Checks. Volunteers are sourced from local churches and must also comply with PFA’s Volunteer Code of Conduct. Campers are divided into age-appropriate groups for accommodation and programmed activities. Parents and carers do not attend the camp with the children as campers are supervised by our volunteer team.

We also conduct a graduate “Junior Leader” program for older returning campers who have shown an interest in helping other children overcome the same struggles they have endured.

The Benefits

There are many benefits for children attending Camp for Kids:

- They learn to develop healthy self-esteem, positive relational skills, positive values and decision-making skills through teamwork and discussion.
- They learn new practical life-skills and how to overcome fear or anxiety when attempting something new.
- They realise that there are many other young people who have a parent in prison; often relieving the burden of stigma and shame.
- Our volunteer team demonstrate healthy living, conflict resolution skills, and positive resilience (healthy responses to difficult situations or events).
- An opportunity to enjoy a camping experience that may otherwise be beyond the financial resources of their family.

Carers also have the benefit of a short respite from looking after their children.