

**Submission  
No 7**

**SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN OF IMPRISONED PARENTS IN NEW SOUTH  
WALES**

**Name:** Dr Julie Smith

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**From:** Julie Smith <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 26 February 2020 6:01 PM  
**To:** Childrens Committee <childrenyoungpeople@parliament.nsw.gov.au>  
**Subject:** Inquiry into Support for Children of Imprisoned Parents in New South Wales

Dear Mr Mason-Cox

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry into Support for Children of Imprisoned Parents in New South Wales being conducted by the Committee on Children and Young People.

I attach here an Evidence Check I and my research team prepared for the Commonwealth Department of Health in 2018 to inform preparation of the Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy. It includes consideration of how women can be supported to provide nurturing care for their infants and children including breastfeeding in prison settings.

It is noteworthy that the prison system has historically been focussed and developed to manage male prisoners, and does not cater well for the quite different situations of the increasing numbers of women prisoners; they are often the main caregivers, and may be imprisoned, short term but very disruptively, for offenses which are typically different from those of male prisoners, but are treated by the system as if they were men.

The invisibility of women and children in key data collections, and failure to develop and implement appropriate policies and procedures are key barriers to improving the health and wellbeing of women and children involved in the courts and prison system. This perpetuates enormous social inequity and disadvantage, and results in avoidable costs to the taxpayer.

I refer the Committee to relevant areas of the Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy released by COAG last June

<https://www.coaghealthcouncil.gov.au/Portals/0/Australian%20National%20Breastfeeding%20Strategy%20-%20Final.pdf>, which also includes recommended actions to protect the human and health rights of children of prisoners and women experiencing pregnancy, birth and breastfeeding in the justice system.

I also attach a study and research presentation on work in this area with Dr Carol Bartle (Christchurch New Zealand) and Dr Karleen Gribble (Western Sydney University) who have great expertise and experience in the support of these vulnerable women and children. New Zealand has taken some important steps forwards in this area that may be of value for consideration in Australia. The work of Celia Lashlie as a leader in the New Zealand prison system (<https://www.celiafilm.com/>) including at Christchurch prison exemplifies the thinking about how changing the lives of mothers can prevent suffering, crime and death impacting whole families and society at large. Celia worked for 15 years within the Prison Service, making New Zealand history in 1985 as the first woman to work as a prison officer in a male prison. Her final role within the Service was as Manager of Christchurch Women's Prison.

Thank you again for the opportunity to make a submission on this important issue. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with the Committee.

Yours Sincerely

Dr Julie P Smith

Honorary Associate Professor and ARC Future Fellow,  
Department of Health Services Research & Policy  
Research School of Population Health, College of Health and Medicine.  
ANU Fellow, Tax and Transfer Policy Institute,  
Crawford School of Public Policy, College of Asia and the Pacific,

The Australian National University  
Canberra, ACT, 0200

[REDACTED]

<https://researchers.anu.edu.au/researchers/smith-jpx>

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