

**Supplementary  
Submission  
No 10a**

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

**Organisation:** SHINE for Kids

**Date Received:** 19 August 2020

## **SHINE for Kids Supplementary Submission Support for Children of Imprisoned Parents in New South Wales**

### **Executive Summary**

SHINE for Kids Supplementary Submission is to be read in conjunction with the submission *“Supporting Children of Prisoners and reducing barriers to family connection” SHINE for Kids’ Submission to New South Wales Parliamentary Inquiry: Children of Prisoners Programs and Policy.*

The Submission outlines 83 Recommendations for supporting children of prisoners in NSW. This Supplementary Submission outlines the priority funding areas to address those Recommendation. In order to address the most significant need SHINE has outlined five priorities sites for each identified program gap. By identifying these gaps and providing these services, SHINE seeks to help reduce family fragmentation, assist incarcerated parents to maintain a connection with their children and support reductions in adult recidivism as well as reduce the likelihood of children transitioning into the child protection and/or justice systems. The programs outlined directly impact the Premier’s Priorities of Keeping Children Safe and Breaking the Cycle.

Despite progress being made, there is still an unacceptable level of inconsistency in services and supports for children of prisoners in NSW. The importance of family ties should be a golden thread running through any new policy framework and program development. In the main, any progression in keeping families connected and fostering family ties in prisons across Australia has been led, developed and funded by the third sector (not for profit sector). This is one of the reasons provision is patchy and better developed in some areas than others. This is further outlined by the SHINE For Kids NSW operating budget. Presently SHINE services 9 out of 39 or 23% of prisons. SHINE’s total funding in NSW is \$2.4 million with the NSW government providing \$837,000 or 35% of this total amount.

The programs outlined below provide an opportunity to fund the delivery of evidenced-based programs that protect our most vulnerable children and reduce recidivism by connecting offenders with their children and providing them with parenting education and support.

### **About SHINE for Kids**

Founded in 1982, SHINE for Kids has provided crucial support to children and young people with incarcerated parents and/or relatives for over 35 years. The invisible victims of crime, children experience significant psychological trauma and impact on their emotional and social development as a result of their parent’s imprisonment.

The only national charity to provide services to support children, young people and their families, SHINE for Kids programs operate in custody and in the community programs throughout NSW, VIC, ACT and QLD. These include supported child and family transport, supported and supervised prison visits, parenting, through-care programs, Aboriginal programs, mentoring, education support, casework, intensive family case management, and carer support.



In 2018-19 SHINE delivered services to 7,200 children, 30% of whom are Aboriginal, 5,000 families, and supported 16,300 child visits in prison. In 2019 SHINE supported a total of 4,006 children in NSW noting that we are only able to provide services in 23% of state prisons.

SHINE for Kids is governed by a Board of Directors and currently employs 50 staff, supported by 300 volunteers.

## **SHINE for Kids Programs**

SHINE believes in the power of early intervention and has a focus on collaborating with government, private prisoner providers, philanthropy, business, universities and other community organisations to reduce the harmful effects of parental imprisonment on children and young people.

There are many things that are unique to the children of prisoners, including the trauma and shame that is often associated with having a parent imprisoned, the fear of being ostracised, the fragmentation of care arrangements and grief and isolation. In some cases children are encouraged or choose not to tell people about their parent and so they are left guarding a terrible secret. In other cases children are not told about their parent's imprisonment and so need to deal with their unexplained departure.

Children of prisoners are six times more likely to end up in custody themselves. When a parent spends time in prison, away from their family and community, it creates an adverse childhood experience for children which has lifelong impact. To fully understand the harmful effects of incarceration on the parent-child relationship, we must first recognise the importance of that relationship to a child's healthy development, which is underscored by attachment theory. Attachment theory is rooted in the knowledge that children should experience warm, intimate, and continuous connections with their parents or parental figures in a way that produces satisfaction and enjoyment. These relationships are crucial to a child's lifelong physical and psychological well-being. Research suggests that children of incarcerated parents are more likely to have insecure attachments to their incarcerated parents and primary caregivers.

SHINE provides through-care programs for mums and dads in custody. It is essential that through-care programs be delivered by an independent organisation that collaborates with Corrections and the existing service systems in community. The establishment of meaningful social relations and a sense of belonging to wider society plays a critical part in the prevention of offending and in the process of desistance from crime and reducing recidivism. SHINE's through-care programs engage with family and focus on the best interests of the child from the point of incarceration through to release and encourage family involvement. Prisoners' responsibilities to their families should be seen as an important lever for change and their families as significant assets for offender management during and at the end of sentences.

## **Integrated service delivery model in NSW for a best practice approach**

### **In-custody Child and Family Engagement Programs**

**Priority additional locations: Hunter, Shortland, Macquarie, Lithgow, Silverwater**

### **Prison In-visit Program – operates within the visiting areas of the prison when visiting**

Visiting prisons can be traumatic, confusing and frequently upsetting for children who must cope with conflicting emotions and a harsh child-unfriendly environment. When children encounter a more enjoyable, fun visit with their parent, they develop a stronger child-parent bond. The Prison In-visit program also has



an impact on the environment of the whole visit area. In a national survey of families and carers utilising SHINE In-visits Program 95% agreed that SHINE helps nurture repair and maintain the child parent bond. 77% stated that their child always appears less stressed when visiting with SHINE support.

### **Child and Parent Days**

Child and Parent Days provide a more normal environment in which a child and their incarcerated parent can interact. SHINE provides supported activities on these days that the child and parent can do together such as creating art, craft activities, sports and games. The incarcerated parent has the opportunity to make their child's lunch, feed a bottle, play and create without the other carer present, empowering them to participate in every-day parenting tasks. These days are for inmates and their children 0-18 years and are usually 4 hours long.

SHINE is currently funded by the NSW government to deliver Child and Parent Days and Invisit support in 9 prisons in NSW or 23%. The 5 priority locations outlined will enable SHINE to reach an additional 36% of children currently in need, with a specific focus on Mothers on Remand at Silverwater.

### **Keeping Us Together – Parenting Program and Playgroup**

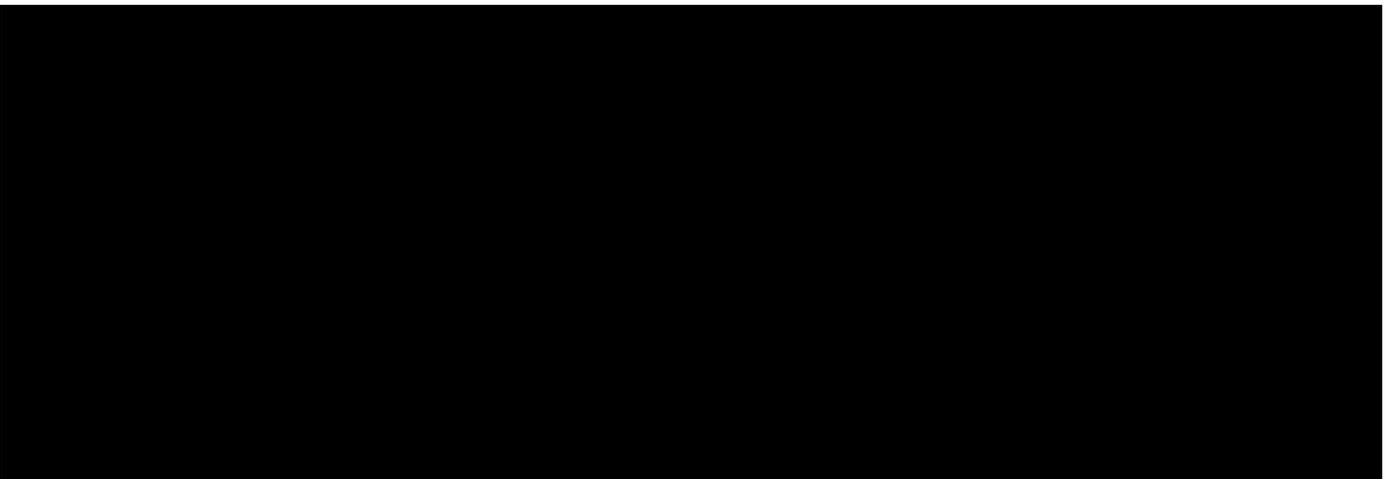
#### **Priority additional locations: Silverwater, Dillwynia, Macquarie, Kempsey, Wellington**

SHINE for Kids uses its unique expertise within the prison environment to provide a holistic, multi-faceted program that includes a comprehensive parenting program, and facilitated Playgroup for parents and children where the incarcerated parent can put into practice the skills learned in the parenting program.

Keeping Us Together brings together the Australian's Childhood Foundation's Bringing Up Great Kids evidenced-based parenting program with SHINE for Kids practice expertise in working with children affected by parental incarceration and mums in custody. It is centered on the best interest of the child and includes 45 hours in-custody support and 12 months post release support. The in-custody component uses mindfulness and reflection to support parents to review and enhance patterns of communication with their children, to promote respectful interactions and encourage the development of children's positive self-identity. It aims to identify and address the sources of unhelpful or hurtful attitudes held by parents. It also works to establish a new relationship context for children and their parents through facilitating opportunities for positive exchanges. This is particularly important for women in custody who have a history of childhood abuse and trauma. Keeping Us Together draws from child-centred and strengths-based perspectives, neurobiological development, attachment theory and narrative approaches. While in

custody, the parent is able to practice the skills learned in the workshops during child in-visits and child and family days.

SHINE's Stay Together Play Together offers high-quality, fun, structured and unstructured play experiences for children and mum in custody and provides opportunities for play-based learning to support positive child development. Play should be freely chosen, be largely self-directed, intrinsically motivated, spontaneous and pleasurable. Stay Together Play Together encourages and supports parents in custody to learn about the education needs of their children and acknowledge the significance of their role in their child's early education. The playgroup is developed in line with Early Years Learning Framework for Australia. As this playgroup is delivered in custody it is important that mums are empowered to take the lead and have agency in the design and selection of activities.



### **Belonging to Family – Pre and Post release Aboriginal through-care program**

#### **Priority additional locations: Cessnock, Wellington, Grafton, Nowra**

The SHINE for Kids *Belonging to Family* initiative aims to reduce the re-offending of Indigenous parents upon release, improve and support family and community relationships, and increase the wellbeing of children of prisoners to reduce their developmental risks, including their risk of offending, and improve their life opportunities. This culturally appropriate early intervention program has been delivered for the past 10 years to inmates incarcerated at the Mid North Coast Correctional Centre, their partners and children. Approximately 40 volunteer community Elders are engaged in the program to support inmates, their partners and children with cultural renewal opportunities; opening dialogue, engaging participation and working with families from a cultural perspective. Belonging to Family is comprised of 3 components:

- Adult group work - designed to break the family cycle of violence and recidivism
- Cultural renewal activities - to support connection to culture and belonging
- Children's group work – to support and empower children of inmates

During the pre-release phase, over a 10 week period, 8 inmates participate in group work while their 8 partners participate in a separate group process (with inmates and partners, and their children coming together at certain points within the group process cycle). During group work their children are supported in their own group together, through cultural games, activities and story-telling, delivered by local community Elders.



Changing the life of a **young** person

**one** future at a time

### **RISE Education Program**

**Priority additional locations: Cessnock, Bathurst, Western Sydney, Clarence, Wellington**

The RISE Education Program gives primary aged students with a parent in prison access to a vital support system that encourages their learning and development. Each student is matched with an education mentor who supports them academically, socially and culturally. Tailored, one-on-one support in the classroom on a weekly basis ensures students are positively engaging with education and provided the holistic support and resilience they need not just to survive an exceptionally difficult time in their lives, but to thrive academically. Once a year students attend RISE Together – a group mentor and mentee outing that helps reduce stigma and isolation, and focuses on increasing self-esteem and increasing peer support. As part of the RISE Education program, SHINE offers its one-day, NESA-accredited teacher training seminar. The seminar helps teachers and schools better support children with an incarcerated parent. RISE also encourages and supports the incarcerated parent to engage in their child's education as well as holding parent/teacher interviews with the parent in custody.

### **Intensive Family Case Management & Support**

**Priority additional locations: South Coast, Goulburn, Hunter, Grafton, Wellington**

Ongoing, stable support is integral to the emotional wellbeing and personal growth of children with incarcerated parents. The issue of intergenerational offending is real, and through mentoring and intensive case management, SHINE for Kids provides early intervention and ongoing support to enable children of prisoners to realise their full potential and develop:



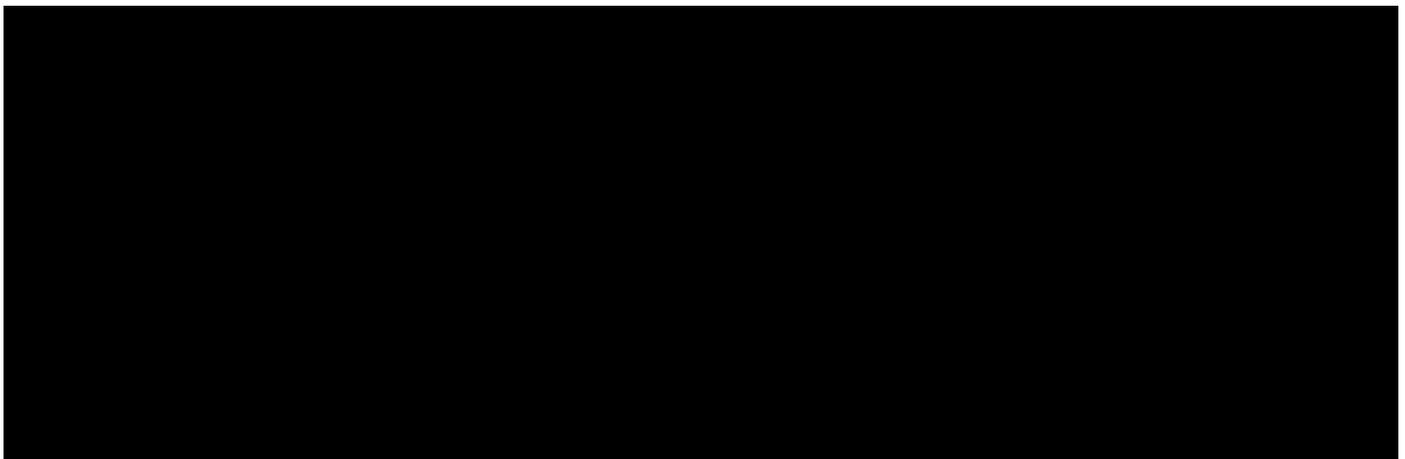
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- Self-respect and that of others
- Integrity & the power of choice
- Higher self-esteem & confidence
- Compassion & Tolerance
- Awareness
- Motivation & Self-Discipline
- Responsibility

The program employs a Family Practice Manager in each location to work intensively with the families 3 months pre and 12 months post release building relationships and support families with:

- Parenting & Relationship support
- Housing & Accommodation
- Health & wellbeing
- Financial Management & Budgeting
- Training & Education
- Employment



### **Ride By Your Side**

**Priority additional locations: Grafton, Western Sydney, Central Coast, Cessnock, South Coast**

Ride By Your Side (RBYS) is a children's mentoring and supported transport service for children who have no other way of having contact with their incarcerated parent. It provides a stable adult mentor for children at-risk while they are being transported to and from the prison. RBYS aims to:

- Help children to re-establish and/or maintain a positive relationship with their incarcerated parent(s)
- Support the child during the visit with the incarcerated parent
- Improve the emotional, psychological and physical well-being of the children
- Reduce isolation, stigma, anxiety and stress while the parent is in custody as the child has had regular contact and maintained bond
- Decrease negative behaviors in inmates as visits with their child are priority



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**one** future at a time

**Capacity Building Investment needed for integrated service delivery**

1. 5 x new 8 seater vehicles to replace aging fleet in Western Sydney, Central Coast, Cessnock, South Coast and Grafton 5 x \$35,000 = \$175,000
2. Development of SHINE volunteer database to support over 300 volunteers in on-boarding, management, rostering and volunteer service delivery. Cost allocated \$25,000.

**Total Capital Required = \$200,000**