

transforming corrections to  
**transform lives**



# Supporting Improved Information Sharing: Lessons from Transforming Corrections to Transform Lives

Lorena Rivas, Janet Ransley, Susan Dennison, Tara McGee, Brian Jenkins,  
Krystal Lockwood, and Peter Martin

[transformingcorrections.com.au](http://transformingcorrections.com.au)



## Acknowledgement of Country

The Transforming Corrections to Transform Lives Centre is based in Meanjin (Brisbane) and delivers the Transform Lives Program from the lands of the Yugarabul, Yuggera, Jagera and Turrbal peoples and the Bindal and Wulgurukaba peoples.

The TCTL Centre acknowledges and pays our deep respect to the traditional owners of the lands on which work, meet and learn. We acknowledge they are the traditional custodians of these lands and have deep and continuing connection country. Sovereignty was never ceded. It always was, always will be, Aboriginal land.



# Transforming Corrections to Transform Lives Centre



## Our Vision

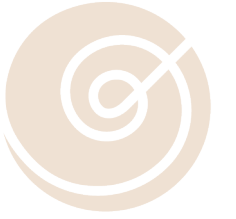
To support mothers and their children to have safe, dignified, and fulfilling lives, breaking down intergenerational cycles of disadvantage and incarceration, by transforming systems and generating new knowledge for evidence-based programs.

# Why focus on information sharing?



- ③ A consensus among mothers affected by incarceration and relevant stakeholders that this is a major obstacle to better outcomes
- ③ Improved information sharing of necessary and relevant information will:
  - ③ Reduce need for mothers and children to re-tell their stories
  - ③ Help mothers have key information about themselves and/or their children
  - ③ Be an important pre-condition for improving collaboration and service provision

# Barriers to information sharing



## 1. Technical

- ⦿ Data and database issues and structures

## 2. Political and legal

- ⦿ Tension between information sharing and preserving privacy
- ⦿ Data sovereignty

## 3. Organisational

- ⦿ Agency culture: differing agency types, purposes and priorities
- ⦿ Timeframes
- ⦿ Lack of control and trust

# Our approach



- ④ **Aim:** Identify barriers to information sharing that might impact integrated, comprehensive support for mothers and their children.
- ④ Documentary analysis of 67 pieces of legislation, policy, procedures from 12 key agencies, all focused on information sharing
- ④ 26 interviews with key stakeholders from 12 key agencies
- ④ Analysis of workshops held with mothers in prison, and with key stakeholders

# Key preliminary findings



## Documentary analysis

- Overall legislation is relatively consistent and comprehensive, and permits sharing of relevant information, especially with consent
- But agencies have developed their own internal guidelines, policies and training for staff which vary in clarity, accessibility and scope
- Suggests that barriers are created by inconsistent implementation, cultural and workforce factors

## Interviews explored these issues

# Key preliminary findings- interviews



## Major barriers to information sharing

- ⦿ Lack of relationships and shared knowledge between agencies
- ⦿ Inconsistencies in types of information collected, systems and processes
- ⦿ Lack of understanding by decision-makers of relevant policy
- ⦿ Risk aversion



# Lack of relationships & shared knowledge between agencies



Having a clear understanding of other agencies roles and functions allows them to:

*'share information with one another readily... [and have] **a really productive and rewarding relationship**'*

One participant personally reached out to another agency for them to review a decision they had made about a mother without crucial information:

*'...for that woman, **that changed her life** and, I think, to this day she is still reunited with [her] children...if I hadn't picked up the phone and advocated appropriately... that would not have been the outcome. I find that a little bit frightening'*

# Information types, systems & processes



*'...information is not passed on, even when they legitimately could, because their **systems are geared to just technical pieces**. I just need this piece; I don't need the other piece'*

*'...sometimes [agencies] respective practice frameworks don't necessarily align, might not be acknowledged or recognised by each other or just clash... my observation is that seems to be the biggest barrier or issues that needs to be worked through. About **how we get greater understanding of each other's frameworks and identify ways to cross the boundaries**'*

# Lack of policy understanding



*'we get clogged up with routine stuff because **we don't know** any more what we can and can't do.'*

*'we don't do professional discretion particularly well. I don't think that the current operating environment... is conducive to... support[ing] people in making discretionary decisions. We've got **some really dumb rules**'*

*'...because of the amount of information that's out there, the overwhelm of that- there's **myths created** about what's in policy, in legislation, in regulation. Then there's some that are just so difficult to access that people forget they exist'*

# Risk aversion



*'I think **it's easier to say no**, right? No doesn't take a lot of work. In fact, if I said no, my job would be easy. What takes work is saying yes and actually assessing the risk and understanding what is the intent of the legislation, ...the policy, ... the procedure....Also, what's the risk? **What's the risk versus the benefit?**'*

# What are the solutions?



## Overcoming barriers

*'...the information sharing is not that complex. Because if you ask yourself the question, is this in the public interest, is this in the interest of the mother and child, you've got your answer... I'm much more about providing lots of reasons to say yes safely'*

## Overcoming clashing professional frameworks and cultures

*'there is provision in legislation for the sharing of information. But it's the culture change piece and it's the trust that needs to be built, to really enable people to feel empowered and supported to do that and know that the outcome is going to be okay'*

# What are the solutions?



## Collective ownership of solutions, leadership from the top and good practice examples

*'we work pretty collaboratively for the most part, and if we do find an area that's particularly obstructive, we'll find out why. If there's a good reason, great. If there's not, then we'll see if there's another way to do what needs doing'*

## Better guidance, training and resources

*'it would help if we had easier access to immediate guidance about what to do... guidance needs to be easy for us to use, friendly, accessible, quick, timely. Not everything needs to be as complex as it is.'*

*'...education around the government goal. So that we're all coming at things with the same sort of goal in mind... I think it's critical that we have the right leadership in any space around women and children. Across the board.'*

# Summary of findings



Review of legislation, policy, literature, and stakeholder views found:

- ④ Agency staff **lack knowledge** about other agencies, who to contact or what protocols to follow
- ④ They over-inflate the extent to which privacy and other laws are major barriers and are **risk-averse** in sharing information
- ④ There is **complexity** – 67 policy documents so far relevant to major government agencies
- ④ Need to **simplify decision making and communicate authorisation** for information sharing by service-providing staff
- ④ A role for **shared practical tools** across agencies

# A collaborative response



- ④ Developed **scenarios** based on real case histories, showing how a lack of information sharing can lead to poorer outcomes for mothers and/or children
- ④ Mapped scenarios in a **one-page visual** summarising the case, and showing **key decision-making** points where better information sharing could have led to better outcomes
- ④ This critical analysis informed **decision trees** to guide better decision-making – aimed at frontline agency staff
- ④ **Agency feedback** on each step from the Systems Change Board
- ④ **Goal:** agencies to incorporate these tools in their own training and procedures to improve consistency and understanding
- ④ Also to be used as a tool with new **Communities of Practice** with service deliverers

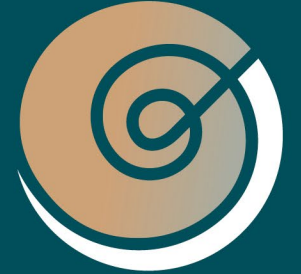


# Next steps



- ④ Have our tools been used, and have they helped overcome barriers? Has there been a move towards more integrated service delivery?
- ④ Our systems change evaluation is measuring the extent to which agency practices change over time, what works to achieve this, and why, and whether this leads to improved outcomes for mothers and children
- ④ There are lessons from this work in how other entrenched problems in service delivery or the public sector can be overcome, using co-creation and collaboration.

transforming corrections to  
**transform lives**



Click here

# Thank you

[l.rivas@griffith.edu.au](mailto:l.rivas@griffith.edu.au), [j.ransley@griffith.edu.au](mailto:j.ransley@griffith.edu.au)

[transformingcorrections.com.au](http://transformingcorrections.com.au)

