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Mother Seeking Safe Home: Aboriginal Women Post-Release†

Eileen Baldry* and Ruth McCausland**

Abstract

The NSW Government has recently announced the establishment of a number of accommodation and reintegration services for offenders leaving prison and for others subject to non-custodial or parole orders. This shift recognises the established importance of post-release accommodation and individual case management for ex-prisoners as important steps towards addressing the high rates of re-incarceration of people in NSW. However, like the vast majority of such services, this latest measure does not sufficiently respond to the specific issues facing Aboriginal women, who are experiencing the fastest rate of increase of all groups of prisoners across Australia. Aboriginal women have higher rates of return to prison, higher rates of social and physical disadvantage, and higher numbers of dependent children than their non-Aboriginal counterparts. Their specific experiences of intersectional discrimination on the grounds of their race and gender remain largely invisible to policy makers. This article draws on the principles of decolonisation, human rights and social justice alongside relevant research on post-release services and support to propose the development of an Aboriginal-women specific transitional model to assist in redressing the cycle of reincarceration for Aboriginal women in NSW.

Introduction

In late 2008, the NSW Attorney General and Minister for Justice, John Hatzistergos, introduced a change to legislation to allow for the establishment of residential facilities to accommodate certain prisoners prior to release from custody and other offenders subject to non-custodial or parole orders (Hatzistergos 2008c). These facilities, known as community offender support program (COSP) centres are, according to the Minister, non-custodial and community-based services, although in reality they are run by Corrective Services mainly in what were previously periodic detention centres. They are intended to provide accommodation, resettlement and reintegration support for offenders, generally for a period of between three to six months. In his Second Reading Speech on the proposed amendment, the Minister stated that the objectives for the establishment of such centres included contributing to a reduction in the risk of reoffending, and providing assistance to obtain sustainable, independent housing and employment in the community; intensive support and

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case management; and outreach services and programs (Hatzistergos 2008c). The Minister also highlighted the Balund-a program at the recently opened Tabulam facility in northern NSW, designed to accommodate up to 50 male and 20 female Aboriginal offenders serving community based sentences and to provide them with targeted programs in a case management framework (Hatzistergos 2008b). The Minister stressed that the program has a strong emphasis on 'throughcare' and further support upon release (Hatzistergos 2008a).

This acknowledgement of the importance of post-release accommodation and individual case management for ex-prisoners is consistent with research and policy findings in Australia and internationally. However, what remains ill-considered in the development of such services and in the broader literature are the specific issues and needs of Indigenous women. Indigenous women have been identified as the most over-represented and fastest growing group of prisoners in Australia, and a group who, with their children, experience particular vulnerability and disadvantage (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2003, 2005).

In this article we focus on the NSW context and provide a critical analysis of what is known about the issues facing Aboriginal women leaving prison, in particular the lack of accessible and appropriate housing and social support. We argue that understanding the high incarceration rates of Indigenous women and the effects on their children in the context of intergenerational poverty, disadvantage and discrimination provides a moral imperative for redress. Taking the principles of decolonisation, human rights and social justice as touchstones, we critique research findings in this field, and propose the development of an Aboriginal women-run approach which is holistic, culturally appropriate and based on Aboriginal women's specific circumstances.

Background

Aboriginal women have been described as invisible to policy makers and program designers in a criminal justice context, with very little attention devoted to their specific needs and circumstances (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2005). There is an assumption that Aboriginal women will use services designed for Aboriginal men or for women generally (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2003:168). Aboriginal women may share aspects of gender disadvantage experienced by non-Aboriginal women, such as economic dependence on men and vulnerability to domestic violence, but they have different experiences based on their race, with Aboriginal women and men sharing a legacy of systemic racism and socio-economic disadvantage. Aboriginal women also experience particularly high levels of family violence but are under-represented in formal reporting of such abuse, arguably due to their experience of racism in the criminal justice system (Public Interest Advocacy Centre and Wirringa Baiya Aboriginal Women's Legal Centre 2001:11). This lack of attention to the distinct needs of Aboriginal women and their children marginalises them and entrenches inequities in service delivery, leading to intersectional discrimination (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2005).

International evidence points to a broader trend of increasingly disproportionate over-representation of Indigenous women in prison. A meeting of the Expert Committee of the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (2000) noted:

> The Expert Group Meeting discussed the increase in the rates of incarceration of racialised women in industrialised and developing societies. Incarceration policies have been addressed by racial justice advocates but this advocacy has focused predominantly on men. In many countries,

> racialised women, including indigenous women, represent the fastest growing segment of the prison population.

A lack of attention in policy and programming is matched, and indeed exacerbated by, a dearth of empirical research and theoretical and statistical analysis of Aboriginal women's experiences, views and expressed needs both in and upon leaving prison. There is a particular need for detailed, qualitative, locally specific data on Aboriginal women who are incarcerated and re-incarcerated in NSW, for reasons of both principle and pragmatism.

What is known is that in New South Wales (NSW), although Aboriginal women make up approximately 2.1% of the female population (NSW Office for Women 2007), they make up 30% of the women's prison population; in contrast, in 1982 they made up 4.5% of the NSW women's prison population (NSW Department of Corrective Services 2008:132). Aboriginal women are also the most rapidly growing group in prison, having increased disproportionately against both Aboriginal males and non-Aboriginal females over the past two decades (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2005; Corben 2008:73). Aboriginal women have higher rates of return to prison, higher numbers of dependent children, higher rates of mental health disorders, and experience higher rates of domestic and sexual violence and homelessness than their non-Indigenous counterparts, and most have been traumatised by having been taken themselves or having members of their family stolen as children (Lawrie 2003; Cunneen 2002a; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2003; Butler & Milner 2003; Baldry & Maplestone 2005; Baldry et al 2006).

In the most significant study on Aboriginal women in prison in Australia to date, *Speak Out Speak Strong* (Lawrie 2003), most of the Aboriginal women who were interviewed (representing half of the Indigenous women prisoners at the time) were single mothers with a number of children; were responsible for children other than their own; had a prior conviction as an adult; were using alcohol or drugs at the time of their last offence with a strong connection between their alcohol or drug use and offending behaviour; and had long and serious histories of abuse (Lawrie 2003:25-51). Along with other research (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Policy Units 2002:16) domestic violence was identified as one of the most serious forms of abuse these women faced when in the community (Lawrie 2003:51). Finding stable, suitable, supported housing to allow them to live with their children upon release was their key concern but in their experience, the most difficult problem to resolve (Lawrie 2003:27). It was argued that this transition needed Aboriginal managed rehabilitation and housing options (2003:69,74).

Confirming Lawrie's findings, the most severely disadvantaged amongst all participants in Baldry et al's (2006) NSW and Victorian post-release study were Indigenous women. These women experienced the highest rates of re-incarceration and homelessness in the sample. They came from, and after prison returned to, a very small cluster of highly disadvantaged suburbs or towns, and moved frequently within these same disadvantaged areas. A lack of suitable housing was found to be a fundamental problem and a predictor of return to prison. The authors surmised there were a number of reasons for this. As well as the problems and disadvantages highlighted by Lawrie, most of these women had experienced multiple prison episodes, had minimal social or material goods prior to incarceration and had served short sentences. Cycling in and out of prison was almost the norm, and did not prepare them for nor create pathways to successful community living (Baldry et al 2006:27). It is theorised by Baldry et al (2003b:28) that these women are subject to serial institutionalisation that throws them frequently from highly structured living (in prison) to chaotic living in the community. This has the effect of depleting the social,

cultural and physical resources and resilience of those individuals, their children and their communities, and compounding exclusion from stable, functional family life.

Relevant Research on Post-Release Services and Support

Indigenous women are vulnerable to being caught up in a cycle of disadvantage and reincarceration on the basis of their gender and race. Research internationally and in Australia indicates that women generally experience higher rates of homelessness and poor housing, and of mental illness, social isolation and depression than males post-release (Wilkinson 1988; Paylor 1995, Baldry & Maplestone 2005; Goswami & Schervish 2002; Hamlyn & Lewis 2000). Studies also suggest that women ex-prisoners' inability to establish positive social connections post-release (Fabb 1991; Robson & Nancarrow 1991; Lewis & Hayes 1997) and the likelihood of them reoffending (Carnaby 1998) are associated with their inability to secure suitable housing, with women with mental illness particularly susceptible to homelessness (Hartwell 2001). Women recently released from prison who die as a result of drug overdose, are likely to have been homeless (Shewan et al 2000; Davies & Cook 1998).

There remains a lack of coordination and integration amongst appropriate government and non-government agencies on post-release matters. Studies including ex-prisoners and those who are reincarcerated, particularly Indigenous women, point to lack of suitable housing with linked services such as mental health and family support, as a key factor in their unsuccessful transition to outside life (Baldry & Maplestone 2005:80-84; Baldry et al 2006:82).

Women exiting prison, their children and families have particular needs that are not being addressed (Morgan et al 2000:2) with children of women prisoners highly likely to suffer emotional, physical and financial hardship during the mother's period of incarceration, and with mothers facing extreme difficulty in establishing a home where they can live with their children post-release (Baldry et al 2003a; Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues 1998). Children of imprisoned parents are at a higher risk of homelessness and disrupted childhoods than other young people (Legislative Council Standing Committee on Standing Issues 1998; Woodward 2003). Nothing is known of the experiences and needs of the children of Aboriginal women being released from prison (Baldry, Ruddock & Taylor 2008).

Stable and suitable housing in an ordinary community setting is significantly associate with staying out of prison (Baldry & Maplestone 2005:85) and is essential to the recovery of children and the reunification of families as well as providing alternatives for those returning to violent partners post release, but is very difficult to secure (Melbourne Criminology Research and Evaluation Unit 2003; Ogilvie 2001; Sisters Inside 2007).

Indigenous women living on the streets, in parks or moving often have been identified as particularly vulnerable to police interference and harassment and re-arrest for public order offences (Coleman 2000:13; Walsh 2007:7). A lack of effective pre and post-release programs for Indigenous people leaving custody has been identified as contributing to this situation (Keys Young 1998; Walsh 2004, 2007), with housing (Krieg 2006) and its the location a key factor in recidivism for women returning to economically and socially disadvantaged suburbs with poor infrastructure (Baldry & Maplestone 2005:83).

Other research points to the importance of culturally relevant services:

> It is futile and perhaps dangerous to impose non-Indigenous norms onto Indigenous people. If Indigenous homelessness is to be addressed effectively, it must be understood in an historical and cultural context that takes account of past injustices ... Without taking this historical perspective into account, and the sustained marginalised treatment of Indigenous people by the State, it is not possible to fully identify and address the barriers to Indigenous people, and women in particular, accessing appropriate services (Cooper & Morris 2003:7).

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner (2005) summarised much of this evidence by highlighting the importance of housing and emergency accommodation options, including safety from family violence, for Indigenous women when released from prison; the importance of being able to access a broad range of programs upon release, including culturally appropriate healing programs; and the lack of coordination of existing government and community services, which has the result of limiting the accessibility of services to Indigenous women.

Analysis: Moving Beyond the Prison Cycle

As documented above, the massive over-representation of Indigenous Australian women in prison is the result of multilayered intersecting factors, many of which are related to past and contemporary government policies and practices (Cunneen 2006). These include specifically racially discriminatory policies that resulted in the forcible removal of Indigenous children from their families; in non-Indigenous people stealing rights to land and associated socio-economic benefits; and in a disproportionate negative impact of the criminal justice system on Indigenous Australians (Cunneen 2006, 2009). While poverty and disadvantage are demonstrated risk factors for contact with the criminal justice system, as are high rates of alcohol and drug use and homelessness, these affect Indigenous people disproportionately. And as noted, Indigenous women in the criminal justice system face unique challenges relating to lack of access to services or support that respond to their specific needs and experiences.

This article does not have the space to explore these or other systemic direct or indirect causes of incarceration of Indigenous women. Our focus is upon the transition from prison to the community post-release as one crucial point at which better policy, funding and practice could make a demonstrable difference to these women and their children. As noted above, it is apparent that current post-release support and housing for Indigenous women is largely inadequate, inappropriate and uncoordinated (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2005).

Framework

An analysis drawing on notions of decolonisation, human rights and social justice (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2003, 2005; Blagg 2007; Green & Baldry 2008) and incorporating Cunneen's work on race, criminalisation and imprisonment (Cunneen 2001, 2006, 2009) could arguably provide a useful framework for policy and programs to assist those Aboriginal women for whom regular re-imprisonment - and associated issues such as family violence, alcohol and drug dependency, poverty and poor health - has become the norm.

Decolonisation requires both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians to 'throw off of the colonial mentality' (Watson 1994:96) and recognise past and present Indigenous cultural, community and spiritual strengths independent from and in spite of colonial oppression. Shedding colonialism implies a process of overturning the dominant way of

seeing the world and representing realities in ways which do not replicate colonial values (McLeod 2000). As well as decolonising mainstream Australian institutions such as the health (Sherwood & Edwards 2006) and justice systems (Cunneen 2002b; Blagg 2007), Watson (1994) and others (Green & Baldry 2008) have argued that a deep shift in personal attitudes is needed also. The ways many non-Aboriginal people think of Aboriginal people and the ways many Aboriginal Australians have internalised those perceptions are embedded in colonial, racist attitudes that hold 'Western' social and cultural values and behaviours and even 'Western' persons as intrinsically superior to Indigenous ways and persons. Cunneen points out the particular western colonising effect of denigrating and devaluing Indigenous women's knowledge (Cunneen 2004). For example, perceptions of Aboriginal women prisoners as infantile or institutionalised and incapable of caring for their children and living functionally in the community perpetuate a colonial mindset. The criminal justice system continues to be a colonised and colonising tool imposed upon Indigenous Australians (Cunneen 2002b). An ongoing process of decolonisation that exposes such attitudes, focuses on changing them, and assists in re-building strengths and resilience in Indigenous women on release from prison could play an important role in post-release support for Indigenous women.

Human rights, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and major subsequent covenants, provide an important internationally agreed set of principles and standards by which to assess and redress inequality. The United Nations has recognised the particular disadvantage experienced by Indigenous peoples as a result of colonisation, but also the distinct collective rights held by Indigenous peoples, such as rights to self-determination, land and culture. Of particular import is the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN General Assembly 2007), which provides an imperative for governments such as Australia's to take effective and special measures to ensure improvement of the economic and social conditions of Indigenous peoples. In policy making and programming in relation to Indigenous women leaving prison, the right of all individuals not to be discriminated against on the basis of race or gender is an important starting point. While current policies and practices may not appear to be overtly racist or exclusionary, if they fail to address inequality experienced by Indigenous women then they are acting contrary to such rights. The positive obligation on governments to address discrimination impeding access to social services and adequate housing is an important measure of the human rights record of countries such as Australia. Given that incarceration and reincarceration erodes capacity for independent community living, the right of Indigenous women to be able to exercise self-determination in relation to their economic, social and cultural development is of importance in this context.

Social justice is a societal and political virtue, a value requiring fairness in distribution of a society's wealth and resources (Rawls 1971). It is predicated on an understanding that the greater liberty, wealth and power experienced by people in the dominant group in society is based on historical, structural factors that serve to perpetuate their dominance. Social justice has also been theorised in terms of policies and approaches that increase a person's freedom to exercise essential capabilities (Sen 2005; Nussbaum 2003). A social justice analysis recognises the structural impediments facing Indigenous women. Social justice, as an underpinning principle of public policy is important in moving beyond the individual to the community. It does this by approaching, for example, the over-representation of Aboriginal women in the criminal justice system as more than a product of the offending behaviour of individuals, and by seeing the wellbeing of society as benefited overall by greater fairness in the distribution of resources and access to opportunities for those who are most disadvantaged. It is especially relevant given the historical exclusion of Indigenous women,

as a group, from citizenship and other rights, from sharing in the social and material benefits of an increasingly affluent society and from equitable participation in Australian society.

Drawing on these concepts as foundational is not just a matter of principle or morality. It is a means to better understand, in fact to perceive with new eyes, the circumstances and needs of Indigenous women in the criminal justice system. In this next section, we propose using them as a framework in considering principles for post-release support and services in the development of an Aboriginal women-run transitional approach which is holistic, culturally appropriate and based on the specific circumstances of Aboriginal women in NSW.

Principles of Effective Post-Release Support

Three principles potentially relevant to effective support for Aboriginal women transitionally and for some time post-release are identified and discussed in the following sections: throughcare, holistic service and service based on self-identified needs.

Throughcare

Throughcare has been noted by Walsh as the first best-practice principle in the transitional management of prisoners (Walsh 2004:7), and can be understood as programs designed to provide continuous treatment, support and education for prisoners from entry into prison to their post-release surroundings. It is linked to aftercare, characterised as long-term community based treatment and support after release from prison or institutionalisation (Baldry et al 2002:2). Throughcare and aftercare are models of service delivery that have been introduced in various jurisdictions, including Australia in recent years. There is evidence that the throughcare approach, with longer term, coordinated post-release support, increases the chance that treatment or rehabilitation received whilst in prison will be more successful (Criminal Justice Social Work Development Centre for Scotland 2004:2) One key to the success of throughcare has been observed to be all agencies involved in an offender's life pre- and post-release, delivering their services in a coordinated and integrated manner (Criminal Justice Social Work Development Centre for Scotland 2004:3). In the United Kingdom, the focus has more recently been on services that address housing, employment and social isolation issues for ex-prisoners by developing a 'community partnership' approach drawing on local service providers (Ward 2001:8) although the extent to which this is achieved is questionable. Regrettably, evidence in Australia suggests that throughcare policy in most jurisdictions is poorly supported with little system-wide integration or collaboration experienced by front line workers (Sutherland & Baldry 2005).

A component of a successful throughcare system is sufficient funding (Walsh 2007) to provide a non-custodial case manager to ensure that persons receive the services they require while in custody and upon their release (Walsh 2004:7). Such a worker is the central contact point for prisoners and their families, brokering services, building capacity and independence and providing support (Boryzycki & Baldry 2003). The benefit of case management is demonstrable. On the whole, ex-prisoners were living in stable accommodation in the Bridging the Gap program in Victoria as a direct result of the support of case managers (Willis 2004:6; Melbourne Criminology Research and Evaluation Unit 2003:78).

But examples of women-specific throughcare with post-release housing support, especially Indigenous examples, are in short supply. There are only a handful of such

services in Australia and internationally with little published information or evaluations available (Sisters Inside 2000; Lynch 2000:2; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2005). Whilst the practice of throughcare suggests a useful model for Aboriginal women, it is important to recognise that it has emerged from a criminal justice system entrenched in a colonised and colonising framework. Throughcare, as with all policies and programs developed by mainstream agencies, needs to be decolonised. In developing a service for Aboriginal women in NSW, it would be imperative that it not be run or framed by criminal justice agencies and be culturally and locally informed in terms of design, staffing and resourcing.

Holistic Indigenous Approach

Evaluations of various post-release housing initiatives point to the reality that the provision of mere accommodation will not necessarily bring about the best outcomes in terms of rehabilitation and recidivism. Post-release accommodation must be holistic in nature, addressing a range of factors from the security of appropriate housing; the wide range of difficulties faced by prisoners upon their release; assisting with children and parenting; respecting women's rights and capabilities; and building independence, self-determination and social, employment and life skills for many months after release (Ward 2001; Kidney 1991 in Walsh 2004:59).

Research by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner concluded that any post-release strategies developed should not be seen purely as addressing the immediate needs of Aboriginal women, but rather as responding to their overall circumstances and context. Consultations on post-release support programs available to Indigenous communities identified the need to move away from reliance on mainstream Western-style programs to an approach which focuses on healing the distress and grief experienced by many Indigenous women and their communities (Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander Social Justice Commissioner 2005).

As in Australia, there is a significant over-representation of Indigenous peoples in the criminal justice system in Canada and there are criticisms that mainstream programs do not adequately respond to their needs (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2005). Healing has formed an important part of alternative approaches to Canadian Indigenous involvement in their criminal justice systems over the past decade, with the establishment of 'healing lodges'. The Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge for Aboriginal women was the first to be established over a decade ago. Services and programs are offered that reflect Aboriginal culture and incorporate Indigenous traditions and beliefs, and are tailored for individuals with a focus on preparation for release into the wider community (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2005). Healing lodges though operate within the prison system, not the community. Without programs promoting an approach based on decolonisation, self-determination and independent living separate from the prison environment, patterns of colonising incarceration may well be perpetuated upon release.

Addressing the Specific Needs of Aboriginal Women

Addressing the special needs of specific groups who experience greater difficulties in transition to the community than others is the third principle. Those experiencing such difficulties have been identified as including Indigenous women, particularly those with dependent children (Walsh 2004:10). From her review of the literature in this area, Walsh recommends that programs focused on Indigenous prisoners must be grounded in their own cultural values, beliefs and realities, and that programs for Indigenous prisoners should be

developed and run by Indigenous people (Thompson 2000; Yeboah 2000; Munro & Jauncey 1991; Alexander 1987; Hazlehurst 1985 in Walsh 2004:55). Goulding similarly recommends that acknowledgement of the value, diversity and richness of Aboriginal culture should be a priority in programs and services for Aboriginal women (Goulding 2004:47). Such analyses are supported by a decolonising approach to addressing post-release issues for Indigenous women, as well as by drawing on a human rights-based approach that recognises distinct rights to self-determination and culture.

Programs grounded in and driven by Aboriginal women's cultural beliefs and practices are essential for the success of Indigenous women's transition from prison to community, yet there is no evidence of governments in Australia, or elsewhere for that matter, taking this principle seriously (Baldry et al 2008).

To date only one Aboriginal women specific post-release service has been reported in Australia. Yulawirri Nurai, located on the central coast of New South Wales, is an Indigenous Corporation established in 1996 in response to the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC). It provides transitional support for Aboriginal women leaving the Dillwynia, Emu Plains and Mulawa Correctional Centres with employment, education, training and housing needs. There is no publicly available evaluation of the service, which is partially funded by the NSW Department of Corrective Services, so it is impossible to assess its effectiveness. However, it is not funded to provide and does not have access to accommodation or substantial services as part of its program. This suggests its long-term effectiveness may be undermined, given the evidence reported above on how crucial safe, appropriate housing is to supporting Aboriginal women and their children in transition to safe community living.

There remains an obvious underlying question regarding what the views and ideas of Aboriginal women themselves are on their post-release needs, in considering a model premised on self-determination and decolonisation. The only research of this kind reported to date is Lawrie's (2003) interviews of women in prison, not specifically focused on post-release needs, Baldry and Maplestone's (2005) brief interviews post-release with ex-prisoners that included Aboriginal women, and Baldry et al's (2008) needs analysis report that explored service needs of Aboriginal women upon release, especially their children's needs. These research reports support the framework and principles explored in this paper, and point to a need to better understand the specific circumstances and respect the expressed needs of Indigenous women leaving prison. Any serious or effective policy response to the endemic issues they face needs to genuinely engage with their experiences and views.

Conclusion

The exponential rise in the numbers of Aboriginal women entering and re-entering prison and the devastating effects this is having upon the women, their children and communities should be a matter of public concern. It is evident that Aboriginal women leaving prison in NSW and, as far as can be ascertained, in the rest of Australia, have specific and unique needs that are not currently being met. There is a dearth of empirical research or comprehensive analysis about successful approaches to services and support for Indigenous women and their children, and a wide gap in understanding the views and ideas of those women regarding what they believe would assist them upon leaving prison.

From the literature reviewed above, it is clear that stable and supported post-release social and housing services are crucial to reducing recidivism and assisting ex-prisoners to

live in the community – a reality recognised by recent NSW Government policy initiatives in this area. But current practices in this area do not address Indigenous women's context or needs. This article has provided a critical analysis of current policies and practices in relation to Indigenous women, recognising their potentially colonising, and racially and sexually discriminatory impact. It concludes that there is a moral and political imperative to redress this legacy of intersectional discrimination and exclusion experienced by Aboriginal women. A framework incorporating decolonisation, human rights and social justice, and embracing the principles of a throughcare, holistic and self identified specific needs approach is suggested to shape an Aboriginal women-run case managed transitional community service. This could provide a new policy and program direction away from the destructive criminal justice vortex in which increasing numbers of Aboriginal women are caught.

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