



MEDIA RELEASE

Funding urgently required to reverse NSW's unprecedented rates of female incarceration.

8 March 2023

This International Women's Day, and ahead of the NSW State Election, the Women's Justice Network (WJN) is calling for all political parties and candidates to commit to providing \$2M per year* in state government funding for their community-based, lived experience-led, mentoring and rehabilitation support program; proven to break the cycle of re-offending.

New South Wales is approaching a crisis point for crime, rehabilitation and prevention as the state is confronted an unprecedented rate of female incarceration and re-offending¹, and an unsustainable trend of escalating corrective services expenditure; \$1.16B pa in 2018² to \$2.5B pa in 2023³.

Despite declining rates of serious criminal activity over the last 20 years⁴, since 2013, the NSW female prison population has doubled⁵.

However, there has been no corresponding increase in female rehabilitation or diversionary programs. This has resulted in over 40% of NSW women and girls re-offending following their release⁶. Repeat offenders account for about half of prison costs⁷.

WJN is a grassroots, not-for-profit (NFP) organisation, led by lived-experience advocates, dedicated to advancing the prospects and well-being of girls and women affected by the criminal law system. WJN is committed to reducing recidivism and incarceration of women

¹ The Keeping Women out of Prison (KWOOP), Profile of women in prison in NSW (2019), Research paper -

² pc.gov.au/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2019/justice/corrective-services/rogs-2019-partc-chapter8.pdf

³ <https://www.nsw.gov.au/media-releases/community-offenders-budget>

⁴ Committee for Economic Development in Australia (CEDA), Double Jeopardy: The Economic and Social Costs of Keeping Women Behind Bars (2022), Collaborative research paper

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*\$2M per year, subject to CPI



and girls through community-based interventions, transitional support, and importantly, through culturally connected and responsive individual engagement.

The WJN firmly believes that, by providing ongoing funding for proven, community-based, lived experience-led initiatives, and taking a whole of government (W-o-G) approach to crime, rehabilitation and prevention, policymakers can responsibly, comprehensively, and equitably address NSW's unprecedented rates of female incarceration and recidivism.

Quotes attributable to WJN Chief Executive Officer, Ms Gloria Larman:

“The problem is as clear and self-evident as the solution - currently 78% of women released from NSW prisons have no access to rehabilitation or transition support services. Whereas the 93% of women supported by the Women's Justice Network's programs do not re-offend.”

“It costs our communities and government over \$110,000 to keep a woman in prison for 12 months. With just \$10,000 WJN can mentor and support a woman for 12 months – and keep her out of the justice system.”

WJN's unique and evidence-based mentoring programs, guided by lived experience advocates, integrates a mentoring style to case work to effectively intervene and deliver tailored support for women and girls reintegrating into the community.

Currently, WJN receives funding from the NSW government that goes to support just 100 mentoring relationships, despite over 2,500 women and girls cycling through NSW prisons every year.

Today, the WJN has distributed an election survey to the major parties and crossbench members, to establish their policy position on these important social, judicial and fiscal issues.

The Women's Justice Network's election survey is available [HERE](#).

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About the Women's Justice Network

The Women's Justice Network (WJN), an organisation set up by women and for women, is a not-for-profit (NFP) dedicated to advancing the prospects and well-being of girls and women affected by the criminal law system.

Led by advocates with lived experience, WJN aims to address the issues facing criminalised women and girls systemically by advocating to improve the systems that impact their lives and individually by support and practical assistance, mentoring and leadership development.

With over 15 years of experience of working with women and girls entangled in the criminal law system, WJN is committed to reducing recidivism and incarceration of women and girls through community-based interventions, transitional support, and importantly, through culturally connected and responsive individual engagement.