Improving Family Violence Support for Women in Victoria's Criminal Justice System

Final Report

The Bouverie Centre, La Trobe University

May 2024

Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin nation as the Traditional Owners/ Custodians of the land on which we work. We recognise their continuing connection to land, water, and community. We pay our respect to Elders past, present and the emerging leaders of the future.

Acknowledgment of Lived and Living Experience

The Bouverie Centre acknowledges people with lived and living experiences as workers, consumers, family members and carers, including those who have gone before us. In being informed and driven by the voices and collective wisdom of those with lived and living experience, we can create meaningful change to strengthen identification, engagement, referral pathways and support services designed to promote the safety and wellbeing of women affected by both family violence and criminalisation.

Authors Acknowledgments

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Key Terms:

Family violence; domestic violence; interpersonal violence; abuse; intimate partner violence; women; female; prison; jail; corrections; justice; support; programs; service.

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Executive summary

Background

Australia's Royal Commission into Family Violence made 227 recommendations to reduce the impact of family violence (FV). Much significant work has since been done in Victoria to reduce the impact of FV, including the redevelopment of the Family Violence Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM), the rollout of the Orange Door network, the work of the Victim Survivors Advisory Council (VSAC) in elevating voices of lived experience, and reforms that demand accountability of both perpetrators and institutions. This project aligns with recommendations to 'Review and update standards for family violence service providers' [140]). Critically, this involves providers' obligations to develop suitable services for diverse communities.

Diverse and vulnerable communities in Victoria represent a significant area of need where FV support is concerned. One of the most vulnerable groups is women in the custodial system. Most are victims of FV (Lynch, Fritch, & Heath, 2012; DeCou et al., 2015; St. Cyr et al., 2021; Cyrus et al., 2021), and at exit from prison, many women are at risk of experiencing or re-experiencing FV (St. Cyr et al., 2021). A range of programs and practices are currently in place in Victoria's women's prisons at various points of the prisoner journey to identify and support both victim-survivors of FV and women who use violence. However, there is significant variability in access and uptake of these services. A review of best practice in FV support for women in the custodial system, and of gaps in FV supports for women in prison in Victoria, is timely.

Aims and Methodology

Therefore, this project aimed to understand and translate:

	Aims	Methodology
1	Current thinking in best practice in family violence programs and services for women in the criminal justice system.	A rapid review of the literature on FV programs for women in custodial systems.
2	Family violence support needs identified by women with lived experiences of family violence and of involvement in Victoria's prison system.	Structured interviews with lived experience advisors.
3	Family violence service needs identified by staff who are supporting the family violence needs of women in Victoria's prison system.	Focus groups with workers in Victoria's women's prisons.

Note. La Trobe University and Corrections Victoria Research Committee provided ethics approval.

Key Findings and Implications

A review of the key themes arising from the three enquiries revealed a significant level of overlap from each of the three evidence sources. The replication of findings across the existing literature and the lived experience of women and workers strengthens the research findings by confirming and validating the conclusions of each individual enquiry. Table 1 summarises the aggregated key

findings and implications drawn from all three enquiries, alongside recommendations ready for consideration by the Victorian Government to promote the protective factors for women involved in the criminal justice system who have experienced family violence. Further details can be found within the body of this report.

Table 1. *Executive Summary of Key Findings and Recommendations for Consideration*

Key Finding	Description	Recommendations for Consideration
1. Gaps in FV support for Women in Prison	• Many women reported not being asked about their FV needs upon entry to prison or during their incarceration. • All three enquiries highlighted problematic communication between prison officers, programs and services, and also with external/ community service providers. • There are multiple barriers to engaging in FV support while in prison, and in community reintegration upon release.	**1.1.** Routine FV screening at, or soon after, prison entry. **1.2.** Explore prison-specific barriers to engagement in support services. **1.3.** Further consultation with lived experience advisors to improve general prison processes. **1.4.** Decarceration and justice reinvestment to prevent the traumatising, retraumatising, and/or stigmatising experience of incarceration.
2. Best Practice Principles to Improve FV Services for Women in Prison	• Key program features that facilitate engagement in FV support while in prison included flexible delivery modes and timing, gender-responsive, trauma-informed care. • Meaningful involvement of lived experience advisers at all levels of program governance, design and delivery facilitates engagement, especially within cultural groupings.	**2.1.** Ensure continued availability of tailored, flexible delivery and mode of FV services. **2.2.** Ensure continuous improvement in culturally safe and culturally specific support. **2.3.** Prioritise the delivery of existing programs that gender-responsive, intersectional, and designed with lived experience in mind at all levels of program governance, design, and delivery.
3. Strengthening Protective Factors that Improve Safety Upon Release from Prison	• Programs grounded in systemic principles that help women to build healthy relationships protect against both FV and recidivism for women upon release. • Safe and accessible housing is critical for post-release safety from FV.	**3.1.** Continued development of programs, services and prison initiatives that incorporate systemic approaches. **3.2.** Explore opportunities to secure safe and stable housing for women who have experience FV upon exit from prison.
4. Addressing Support Needs for Staff Delivering Services	• Worker's desire greater cross-program collaboration and support. • Workers experience significant job insecurity due to short-term funding contracts, which also impact program continuity and development. • Role demands and workplace isolation negatively impact worker wellbeing. • Expertise and specialised qualifications are necessary for workers providing FV services to incarcerated women.	**4.1.** Develop opportunities for program staff to receive peer support, for example, the establishment of Communities of Practice. **4.2.** Explore strategic funding opportunities that enhance job security for FV prison workers and longevity in the development and delivery of FV programs in prison. **4.3.** Explore opportunities for additional training and development for prison officers. **4.4.** Advocate for additional on-site trained case managers and specialist FV practitioners that are available to support women who have experienced FV.

Introduction

Background and Rationale

Most women in Victoria's criminal justice system, and custodial systems around the world, have experienced family violence (FV) (Lynch, Fritch, & Heath, 2012; DeCou et al., 2015; St. Cyr et al., 2021; Cyrus et al., 2021). When exiting prison, women may be at an increased risk of re-experiencing FV (St Cyr et al., 2021). While FV services are offered to women in Victoria's prisons, there is significant variability in access and uptake of these services. For example, women on remand or short sentences have vastly reduced opportunities to engage in relevant supports. There remains a clear imperative to improve service engagement through systematically understanding the barriers to and enablers of access and uptake.

These observations sit within the context of a relative lack of research attention to cohorts of incarcerated women compared to men (Dowden & Andrews, 1999). There is an identified need for gender-responsive frameworks that support women's unique needs in custodial systems (Kreis, Schwannauer, & Gillings, 2014; Farmer, 2019). Where women have experienced FV, identifying their need for support is critical to mitigate associated risks of re-experiencing FV upon release, including associated flow-on effects related to housing-related security, safety, and recidivism.

Diverse and vulnerable communities in Victoria represent a significant area of need where FV support is concerned (Victorian Government, 2022). One of the most vulnerable groups is women in the custodial system (Crime Statistics Agency, 2019). Based on these observations, a review of best practice in FV support for women in the custodial system, and of gaps in FV supports for women in prison in Victoria, was timely.

Project Aims

The overall aims of this project were i) to generate new knowledge for optimising access to, engagement with and equity of FV support available to women in prison in Victoria, and ii) to translate this knowledge in an appropriate format that is co-determined by the resulting synthesis of evidence provided by each of women, workers, and the broader evidence base.

Specifically, through three complementary enquiries, we aimed to understand the:

1.   Current thinking in best practice in FV programs and services for women in the criminal justice system, via a rapid review of the existing published literature.

2.   FV support needs identified by women with lived experiences of both FV and Victoria's prison system, via a series of interviews with lived experience advocates.

3.   FV service needs identified by staff who are supporting the FV needs of women in Victoria's prison system, via a series of focus groups with workers.

Research Questions

Four overarching research questions underpinned each of the aforementioned project aims to understand what are the:

- Identified gaps in FV support for women in prison?

- Best practice principles for FV support services in prison?

- Protective factors that help women stay safe from FV when exiting prison?

- Support needs of staff delivering FV support for women in prison?

Relevant Existing Programs and Services Available in Victoria's Women's Prisons

There are a range of programs and practices currently in place in Victoria's women's prisons that seek to identify and support victim-survivors of family violence and women who use violence. Further, parenting and family engagement programs and practices are also currently in place at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre and Tarrengower Prison. These include the 'VACRO Family Visits Program' and the 'Living with Mum Program', where eligible primary carers can apply to have their children (up to school-age) reside with them in custody during their sentence.

Evaluation and extensive commentary on all existing programs was outside the scope of this small-scale research project. However, the findings and recommendations that are reported on for each of the three enquiries in the current project are intended to supplement and build on these existing initiatives. Further information on these programs and practices can be located on the Corrections Victoria (CV) website.

Structure of the Report

The subsequent sections of this report first outline the methodology and key findings from each individual enquiry conducted as part of this project. The final chapter provides the triangulated findings of all three enquiries considered together and offers recommendations and implications for policy and practice. Appendices provide the detailed findings from each enquiry.

Enquiry (i) Literature Review

This section reports on the first component of the project, a literature review of FV programs and services for women in custodial systems.

It is organised in two parts:

Part a. Family Violence Programs and Services for Women in Custodial Systems: A Review of **Evidence Syntheses**

Part b. Family Violence Programs and Services for Women in Custodial Systems: A Review of the **Grey Literature**

The purpose of Part (a) was to identify the replicated evidence (i.e., systematic reviews, scoping reviews, or meta-analytic reviews) on FV programs or services for women in custodial systems. Our intent was to identify sources of evidence that evaluated, researched, or otherwise reported on any FV-related programs or services currently available for women in custodial settings.

The purpose of Part (b) was to identify reports on projects, policy reform, practice guidelines and submissions from relevant stakeholders to various inquiries, committees, and the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence. This aspect of the two-part literature review aimed to synthesise the local (Australian) grey literature such as policy documents, guidelines, and recommendations for supporting women who have experienced both FV and incarceration.

Part a: Family Violence Programs and Services for Women in Custodial Systems: A Review of Evidence Syntheses

Background and Rationale

This section of the report details the process and findings of the first component of our two-part review: a rapid review of the replicated evidence on FV programs and services for women in custodial systems. 'Replicated evidence' refers to findings that have been examined across multiple studies and are reported in a systematic review, scoping review, rapid review, or meta-analytic review and thus provide systematic syntheses of available evidence on a given research question. Review methodologies play a critical role in decision making in evidence-based practice and policy reform (Gopalakrishnan & Ganeshkumar, 2013).

The aim of the current review was to identify the available replicated evidence on FV programs and services for women in custodial systems. Our intent was to identify sources of evidence that reported on any FV-related programs or services currently available for women in custodial settings, to understand what programs and services are being evaluated, researched, or otherwise reported on in the peer reviewed literature.

Methods

Search Strategy

Database searching followed the Cochrane Rapid Review guidelines (Garritty et al., 2020). First, search terms were piloted in relevant databases in consultation with a specialist librarian to identify appropriate databases within project scope. A search was then conducted in August 2022 in three databases (Medline, Scopus and PsycINFO). Search results were restricted to peer reviewed articles published between 2012-2022 to ensure a contemporary review of the literature. Search terms relating to FV (domestic violence or interpersonal violence or abuse or domestic abuse or trauma or intimate partner violence), gender (female or wom?n), custodial systems (custod* or crimin* or jail or remand or correction* or justice or offend* or prison), and services (program or service* or support) with MeSH headings were used.

The systematic search identified a total of 7,459 records (3,468 from Scopus, 2,319 from Medline and 1,672 from PsycINFO). Following the removal of 577 duplicate records in Endnote 20 (Gotschall, 2021), 6,881 records remained.

Study Eligibility

Records were eligible for inclusion if they reported on replicated evidence about FV programs or services for women in custodial systems. Inclusion was open to any programs or services that involve FV/family safety support or education. Records were eligible for inclusion if they included either a description or outcomes of the program/service.

Study Selection

Records were screened for eligibility by applying the following terms to the advanced search function in Endnote: Title contains 'review' or 'systematic review' or 'rapid review' or 'meta-analytic review' or 'meta-analysis' or 'meta-analytic' or 'meta-synthesis' or 'literature review' or 'scoping review' or 'replicated'. This screening process identified 249 potentially relevant records.

Records (*n*=249) were then screened at title level to identify relevant records. This resulted in the identification of 25 articles eligible for full text review. Supplementary Table 1 presents a list of the records subjected to full text review, with key reasons for exclusion.

Study Screening

The PRISMA diagram (Supplementary Figure 1) shows the study identification and screening process. Of those articles eligible for full text review (*n*=25), none met the a priori inclusion criteria. One record did not have a full text available. In most other cases (*n*=18) exclusion was because the article did not report on a FV-related program or service. Programs or outcomes instead included, for example, physical and mental health outcomes or services, substance use outcomes or services, interventions for STI and HIV risk, perinatal care needs, trauma, or mother-infant relationships.

A small group of identified articles (*n*=4) were ineligible as they were not specific to custodial settings. Instead, these reported on intimate partner violence interventions in shelters or drop-in centres; responses to domestic and FV in general (non-custodial) systems; police and prosecution responses to intimate partner violence; and child advocacy centre responses to abuse. Finally, two

articles were ineligible as they reported on samples that were not female or female-only. One of these drew from a sample of males, and one drew from a sample that did not disaggregate findings by gender.

Results and Conclusions

No articles identified via the current review met the established inclusion criteria. In other words, we did not identify any records that reported on replicated evidence about FV programs or services for women in custodial systems. While it is promising to see some high-quality evidence of interventions and initiatives in prison, e.g., regarding women's physical or mental health or substance use, the lack of evidence on FV programs specifically warrants focus given the high rates of family safety concerns in this population (MacDonald, 2013; Baldry, 2009).

While it is possible that relevant records were omitted from the findings due to the choice of databases or the selection criteria, the result may also reflect the broader lack of available evidence on women prisoners' needs compared to men's (Stansfield et al., 2020; Zellerer, 2003) and further amplifies calls for an increase in research funding to address the substantial evidence gaps on how best to support women in custodial systems (Farmer, 2019; Bevan, Lynch & Morrison, 2016; MacDonald, 2013). Indeed, two of the records identified in the current review were excluded as they drew from a sample which was not female or female-only, or did not disaggregate findings by gender (Gannon et al., 2019).

Broader bodies of evidence attest to the differences between male and female prisoners in terms of presentations and needs for support (Farmer, 2019). Research findings from cohorts of male prisoners cannot be applied to populations of female prisoners, who have unique experiences, presentations, and care needs (MacDonald, 2013), and support provided is likely to more effective when it follows gender-responsive principles (Stathopoulos, Quadara & Clark, 2012; Bartels & Gaffney, 2011).

Research concerned with female prisoners and FV tends to focus on descriptive or prevalence studies and lacks attention to translation options for adequate and targeted support and intervention (MacDonald, 2013). We echo calls for further peer-reviewed research on the effectiveness of treatment options for women prisoners who have experienced (or perpetrated) FV (Bevan, Lynch & Morrison, 2016; MacDonald, 2013). In the interim, the grey literature (i.e., policy documents, models of care, and government reports) will offer the most useful and up-to-date indication of how best to meet women's family safety support needs in this arena.

Part b: Family Violence Programs and Services for Women in Custodial Systems: A Review of the Grey Literature

Introduction and Aims

Part (b) of the literature review involved a search of the grey literature to identify any unpublished or non-commercially available articles on relevant topics including women's prisons, FV, law and policy. Grey literature refers to information produced by governments, industry, and academics in a variety of formats not controlled by commercial publishing (Adams, Smart and Huff, 2016). Grey literature articles have therefore not usually been peer reviewed but can still provide reliable and recent information on a given topic area.

The current grey literature search aimed to identify reports on projects, policy reform, practice guidelines and submissions from relevant stakeholders to various inquiries, committees, and the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence. This aspect of the two-part literature review aimed to summarise and synthesise the local (Australian) grey literature such as policy documents, guidelines, and recommendations for supporting women who have experienced both incarceration and FV.

Search Strategy

To locate relevant grey literature, a Google search using the search terms "Family violence AND female AND prisoners AND programs" was completed on August 9th, 2022. This is a commonly applied methodological approach in reviews of the grey literature (Godin et al., 2015). The search was restricted to the first 100 items on Google and those which focused on an Australian context. Reference lists of identified records were also scanned for additional relevant articles to include.

Inclusion Criteria

Records were included if they were developed by an Australian organisation for an Australian context and mentioned all of the following: a) women; b) family violence; c) women in prison; and d) recommendations specific to improving outcomes for women who have experienced both FV and imprisonment.

Results

A total of 30 records were located via the Google search, plus an additional 10 records which were located via a search of the reference lists. Of these, 16 records from 12 different organisations met the inclusion criteria and were included in the synthesis. Records included 8 reports, 6 submissions to governmental enquiries and 2 practice guidelines. Submissions included 2 submissions to the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence (2015); 2 submissions to the House Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs – Inquiry into Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence (2020); 1 submission to the Development of the Fourth Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children (2018); 1 submission to the Parliament of Victoria Legal and Social Issues Committee – Inquiry into Victoria's Criminal Justice System (2021).

Key Findings

The grey literature was underpinned by an evidence base formed through contemporary and relevant policy and practice analysis. The minimal peer reviewed research in this arena in the local Australian context appears to have driven the targeted policy and practice reviews that were identified via grey literature review.

Eligible records were subjected to a process of thematic synthesis according to the recommendations made by each record regarding support for women at the intersect of criminalisation and FV. Eight distinct themes were identified that grouped the overall recommendations made across articles. Table 2 presents an overview of synthesised recommendations, grouped by theme, along with an indication of their prominence in the literature.

Table 2. Overview of Themes from Grey Literature Review.

Theme	Synthesised Recommendation	No. of times cited
1. Culturally specific support	Family violence programs and services delivered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in prison are reported to be more effective when developed with and delivered by First Nations women.	13 records, 9 orgs
2. Coordination between service providers	Evidence suggests that there is a need to improve the coordination between service providers, including access to adequate housing and continuity of care post-release.	9 records, 7 orgs
3. Decarceration and justice reinvestment	Evidence pointed to the need to focus on primary prevention or early intervention with at-risk groups of the population *before* they are incarcerated. Specifically, moving away from imprisonment as the main punishment for criminal offences, and reinvest prison funding into programs that address factors that impact one's involvement within the justice system.	8 records, 7 orgs
4. Staff training	Multiple records called for greater investment in training and workforce capacity-building for police, prison officers, magistrates/legal representatives, generalist mental health and/or child protection workers to improve their ability to address the specific issues experienced by women at the intersect of FV and incarceration.	8 records, 7 orgs

5. Gender-responsiveness and intersectionality	Programs that apply gender expertise when providing specialist FV services to women in prison (including an understanding of intersectionality) are thought to be more effective in facilitating safe engagement with FV support for women in prison.	7 records, 6 orgs
6. Trauma-informed support	Multiple sources suggested that trauma-informed care and support is key to best practice, given that trauma is central to women's offending pathways and treatment needs. A trauma-informed approach involves looking at all aspects of programming and service provision though a "trauma lens", not just those directly addressing the impacts of trauma.	6 records, 6 orgs
7. Involvement of lived experience	Meaningful and genuine involvement of women with lived experience of incarceration and FV across the service framework at all levels of program governance, design and delivery.	5 records, 4 orgs
8. Systemic approaches	Service delivery should incorporate systemic principles and advocacy, such as programs that focus on improving inter-personal relationships with family and other positive social networks.	4 records, 4 orgs

More detailed theme descriptions are presented in Supplementary Table 2 (Appendix D) in order of most to least commonly reported. Recommendations within each theme are grouped based on a 'lifecycle' heuristic that is designed to follow a chronological flow through systems/inputs (see page 49).

Conclusion

The findings of the grey literature review synthesised a diverse set of contemporary recommendations spanning multiple policy domains. Of note, there was significant overlap in the themes and recommendations offered by the 12 Australian organisations included. This convergence strengthens the confidence in these recommendations, which if implemented, are likely to significantly benefit women facing family safety concerns and risk of incarceration.

Enquiry (ii): Lived Experience Advisor Interviews

Methodology

Following on from the findings of the literature review, Enquiry (ii) employed primary data collection methods to engage and synthesise the voices of women with lived experience in Victoria's criminal justice system. This section details the research approach used for this part of the project: namely, the interviews with lived experience advisors (Enquiry ii).

Ethics Approval

Ethics approval for this part of the project was provided by the La Trobe University Human Research Ethics Committee in August 2022 (HEC22217) and a minor Ethics modification (allowing a broadening of recruitment pathways) was approved in November 2022.

Eligibility Criteria

Advisors were eligible to participate in this project if they i) had a self-reported lived experience of any kind of FV, and ii) had a lived experience of incarceration in one of Victoria's women's prisons (Dame Phyllis Frost Centre or Tarrengower Prison) within the last five years.

Recruitment

There were two recruitment pathways for this enquiry: an internal (Bouverie Centre) referral pathway and an external referral pathway. For the former, relevant Bouverie clinicians were supported to mention the project to any eligible clients during intake or the course of an episode of care. This was primarily via a throughcare service available to women who had been involved with a Bouverie family therapy program being delivered in Victoria's women's prisons. After several months, this internal recruitment pathway had not been fruitful, resulting in the decision to expand recruitment pathways to relevant external organisations.

We then approached two organisations with information about the project: Safe and Equal and the Victim Survivor Advisory Council (VSAC). Both were happy to support recruitment efforts. An Expression of Interest for engagement through VSAC was submitted by our team in November 2022 and VSAC subsequently referred an eligible participant for the project. Safe and Equal (the peak body for specialist FV services that provide support to victim survivors in Victoria) supported recruitment by including a project advertisement in their monthly bulletin to victim-survivors/survivor advocates and member services, issued December 2022. A stakeholder at Access Health St Kilda (a primary healthcare centre that enhances the health and wellbeing of people who are marginalised) received this news and worked with our team to support direct recruitment of women on-site in January 2023.

For direct recruitment of advisors on-site at Access Health St Kilda, Access Health staff supported warm referral of eligible and interested women to our team. We then provided interested women with the Participant Information Statement and Consent Form, confirmed eligibility, and answered any questions before commencing the interview.

Advisors were also able to self-refer based on information they had received through the VSAC or Safe and Equal communications. This directed them to a link to an online Participant Information Statement and Consent Form. Where consent was provided via this online form, our team made an approach phone call to the advisor to provide further information, confirm eligibility, read through the Participant Information Statement, answer any questions, and schedule the interview appointment.

Sample

The sample included a total of six lived experience advisors. Three were recruited by Expression of Interest via the online Participant Information Statement and Consent Form, and three were recruited on-site at Access Health St Kilda.

Regarding custodial background, all advisors had had one or more periods of incarceration at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (none had been incarcerated at Tarrengower Prison). All had experienced relatively short sentences or periods of remand, ranging from 1 month to 5 months. The sample included participants from different cultural backgrounds.

Data Collection

Data collection occurred in two parts: a) a series of individual interviews with lived experience advisors, and b) a small group workshop with three of the six lived experience advisors from Part a) participating together. Both parts were facilitated by the Chief Investigator (AB) and Lead Project Researcher (ZC).

Part a) Individual Interviews.

The on-site interviews at Access Health St Kilda were conducted in a comfortable, private room. Two other interviews were conducted in a comfortable, private room at The Bouverie Centre, Brunswick. The remaining interview was conducted over Zoom to accommodate a participant living outside of metropolitan Melbourne. All interviews were audio-recorded for transcription purposes.

Prior to each interview, the researchers re-confirmed the advisor's consent and provided a further opportunity for advisors to ask any questions. Interviews were structured and ranged from 16 minutes to 52 minutes in duration. Following the interview, the researchers checked in on advisor wellbeing, and again provided an opportunity for advisors to ask any questions and provided a list of resources for further support. In line with renumeration rates provided by leading services and governmental research bodies who regularly engage with, and advocate for, consumers/advisors with lived experience (e.g., Black Dog Institute, 2020; National Mental Health Commission, 2019), advisors were provided with a prepaid debit card to the value of $220.00. This amount was reflective of a half day of participation derived from the *Australian Government Renumeration Tribunal Remuneration and Allowances for Holders of Part Time Public Office Determination as "Offices not specified"* (National Mental Health Commission, 2019)**.** They had been informed about this remuneration ahead of participation, as part of their study invitation. For those advisors who travelled to and from The Bouverie Centre for their interview, a cab charge was provided to cover inbound and outbound transport where requested. Advisors were invited to indicate their interest in being followed up for Part b) of the project.

Part b) Small Group Workshop.

Where advisors had previously indicated their interest and availability for the subsequent small group workshop, we invited advisors to a workshop session at a time that was suitable for all. This workshop was facilitated by the Chief Investigator (AB) and Lead Project Researcher (ZC). Three of six advisors participated in this session. The remaining three advisors could not be recontacted at the time of scheduling the workshop.

We presented advisors with an overview of the deidentified thematic findings from Part a) of the project. We systematically shared an overview and description of each theme generated from Part a) of the project and asked advisors to verify and add or remove detail from each theme as needed. This was designed as a collaborative and transparent conversation in which lived experience advisors could improve the accuracy and depth of our findings. At the completion of the workshop, advisors were again provided with a prepaid debit card to the value of $220.00. Again, they had been informed about this remuneration ahead of participation, as part of their study invitation. We checked in with advisor wellbeing, provided a list of support resources and an opportunity for advisors to ask any questions.

Analytic Strategy

Interview recordings from both Part a) and Part b) were transcribed using standard transcription software with transcripts then verified and edited by the Lead Project Researcher. Transcripts were subjected to a process of thematic synthesis whereby core, common themes were generated to summarise the breadth of participants' experiences. The Lead Project Researcher (ZC) led the thematic synthesis and the Chief Investigator (AB) reviewed and contributed to the final list of themes. In Part b) of the enquiry, themes were checked and refined by the attending lived experience advisors. This verified and refined list of themes forms the basis of the findings we report on for this part of the project.

Key Findings: Interviews with Lived Experience Advisors

Part a) Interviews with Lived Experience Advisors

We analysed transcripts from our conversations with lived experience advisors and identified nine core themes. These are summarised in Table 2 below.

Table 2. **Themes Arising from Enquiry (ii) Part a) Interviews with Lived Experience Advisors**

	Theme/Subtheme	Description
1	**Gaps in identification of FV need**	Advisors reported FV support was not consistently screened while in prison. The onus on women to seek assistance was potentially problematic when many women struggle to recognise their own experiences of FV, indicating a need for direct supportive enquiry.

2	**Prison as retraumatising, or directly traumatising**	Given most incarcerated women have experienced trauma, Advisors identified prison as a retraumatising experience, regardless of past FV experiences.
3	**Prison as stigmatising**	Barriers to post-release reintegration exist due to significant bias due to women's criminal history, with resultant discrimination, stigmatisation, and distrust from the community. Advisors reported some FV workers lack rapport with criminalised women due to limited experience working with marginalised communities and poor understanding of the multiple complexities of their lives. This can leave women feeling judged, isolated, and disconnected.
4	**Challenges in navigating multiple services**	Many women need to simultaneously engage with multiple services. This can be "triggering" as it requires women to retell their story multiple times, either to different FV services or across other services (e.g., Child Protection, Corrections, AoD services).
5	**FV services not identifying multiple needs**	Advisors felt that FV support did not always address their multiple, complex needs. They experienced services as often siloed, which may for example mean that a woman is supported for her substance use needs, but the service fails to identify her as a survivor of FV.
6	**Tailoring and flexibility of delivery and mode of FV services is needed**	Flexible ways of accessing FV support while in prison and upon release are likely to increase engagement (e.g., group sessions, one-to-one sessions, phone support and reading materials). Provision of culturally specific support was a positive example of how programs could be tailored to meet the specific needs of this population, and is a key protective factor. Advisors who accessed culturally specific support seemed to have a more positive experience than the other women we spoke to. Programs that helped women to engage in safe relationships and communities were important to women.
7	**Multiple barriers to engagement with services (in prison and post-release)**	Barriers to accessing FV support including short sentences or periods of remand, significant operational barriers (e.g., difficult to get information about services), staff resourcing limitations, or distrust in services or workers.
8	**Legal structures and processes are not sensitive to individual needs or systemic impacts of criminalising women (e.g., on children)**	Many women emphasised the unique implications of even short periods of incarceration. For example, primary caregivers are separated from their children during incarceration, which can be deeply traumatic for both the woman and her child. Women emphasised the need for more nuanced approaches to sentencing and rehabilitation that avoid periods of incarceration.
9	**Secure housing, especially upon release, is vital for women to stay safe from FV**	Every advisor we spoke to identified the importance of secure housing for post-release safety from FV. Women incarcerated (even for short stays) often lose their housing. Sometimes sentences are longer if women do not have a secure address to be released to.

Part b) Key Findings from Lived Experience Advisor Workshop

In the subsequent advisor workshop, we shared the list of themes and their descriptions with attendees. Systematically reviewing each theme, we asked attendees whether we had accurately captured their experiences, whether we had missed anything, whether there was anything else they would like to share, and whether there were any recommendations they would make to address each theme. We took notes and made edits to themes during the focus group session so that advisors could engage in this process in real time. This occurred with the list of themes and recommendations projected onto a screen so that advisors could view and make suggestions to the evolving list of themes. We also provided an option for advisors to send any subsequent edits or reflections on the list of themes after the focus group session, but no further edits or comments were made.

Below we present an overview of the main reflections and accompanying recommendations that were added during the workshop phase, organised by theme. In general, advisors agreed with the overall structure of themes and offered important feedback that helped us refine the final list of themes and to link these with targeted recommendations.

The themes and reflections that arose reflect the subjective, lived experiences of the advisors contributing to this project. Further detail regarding each theme and the accompanying recommendations can be found in Supplementary Table 4 (Appendix F).

1. Gaps in identification of FV need

Advisor feedback confirmed the onus being on women to seek support rather than support being proactively offered within the prison. Advisors reflected on the range of accessibility issues related to the efficient identification of FV support needs. For example, women who have acquired brain injuries or limited literacy skills face challenges in accessing services, and options should be provided for those who require assistance with paperwork.

2. Prison as retraumatizing, or directly traumatizing

Discussion of this theme brought about a critical refocus on language. We had previously labelled the theme 'Prison as retraumatizing' but advisors clarified that prison can be directly traumatizing, too. That is to say, the experience of incarceration is traumatic in its own right even where a woman may not have previously experienced trauma.

Similarly, advisors noted a tendency for the term 'trauma' to be over-used and at times inappropriate: e.g., where prison officers report using 'trauma-informed' practice but their interactions with women are not experienced as sensitive to their previous experience of trauma. Advisors clarified the inappropriateness of this language given the fact that the prison system is fundamentally not set up for healing. Further, some of the advisors described the process of 'strip searching' as a form of sexual assault which could be both directly traumatising as well as re-traumatising for women who have previously experienced violence.

Advisors offered additional detail about how some of the dehumanising practices in prison can lead to trauma. This can include experiences such as basic healthcare needs not being met, and women

being forced to wait for unreasonable lengths of time for basic needs such as water, sanitary items, or medicine; the removal of usual coping mechanisms; and the lack of access to adequate treatment for alcohol and other drug withdrawal.

3. Prison as stigmatising

Advisors took the opportunity to add some extra detail to this theme. Women can become experts of managing their own situations within violent relationships and are frequently doing their own assessments of risk in these situations. The fact that this may not be recognised by the service system can add another level of perceived stigma whereby women feel disempowered and reluctant to disclose information when the outcomes are unknown (e.g., when there may be statutory involvement).

4. Challenges in navigating multiple services

Advisors reflected on the overall feeling of this theme as one of 'organisational abandonment'. Even services set up as solutions to women having to retell their story (e.g., the Orange Door) make women feel they are in a game of 'ping pong' due to the lack of rapport. Advisors reflected that it is not just about retelling the story, it is the experience of repeatedly not being *heard* that is so difficult.

Further, advisors shared that retelling stories can result in women seeming somewhat 'detached' to their story, meaning they feel the emotion is lost when seeking support (and this sometimes means that women are perceived as less affected by their situation than they truly are).

5. FV services not identifying multiple needs/holistic assessment (e.g., FV and AOD)

In discussing this theme, advisors commented on some system-level blind spots that impact on the identification of multiple intersecting needs. For example, drug use is often not seen as a coping mechanism or symptom of trauma, and therefore not treated as such. Evidence-based practices are needed for dealing effectively with complex trauma, which should always include a prioritisation of connection, trust, and rapport.

6. Tailoring and flexibility of delivery and mode of FV services is needed

When reflecting on the sub-theme of group work as a specific delivery mode for services, advisors commented on the unhelpful narrative that has persisted in popular media about women in prison. Advisors reflected that prison can be a much more supportive environment than how it is often depicted, where peer support among women is concerned.

Advisers felt that informal supports could be better acknowledged as important sources of advocacy (e.g., family members or lived experience mentors). This could involve a mentorship role being offered to women serving longer sentences. We note that mentorship roles are offered in the LFFV program, but there have been challenges with locating appropriate women who are in custody for a requisite period of time (given short periods of incarceration for many). Programs that support women to develop healthy and safe relationships were thought to be a key protective factor.

While there is a significant amount of information and support provided to remandees from dedicated Assessment and Transition Coordinators (ATCs), Remand Program Facilitators and

ATLAS programs, advisors feel that more information about available supports could be provided during the orientation period (within the first week of sentencing). Alternatively, pamphlets could be provided to inform women of the range of services that are available.

Transitional links are currently made through various points such as ATCs and Good Shepherd, with referrals to The Orange Door upon release, but more continuity of FV support is desired by women pre- and post-release. Additional links (and potentially more advertising of existing ones) made by programs and services to different community-based programs post-release could be beneficial.

7. Multiple barriers to engagement with services (in prison and post-release)

Here, advisors added detail to the significant service barriers that exist during the post-release phase. For example, if Centrelink staff are issuing a crisis payment for someone who has just been released from prison, they also need to disclose or assess what other services or supports that person could be eligible for. This might include support for FV payments, housing, PBS support, and rent assistance.

8. Legal structures and processes are not sensitive to specific needs of women or systemic impacts of criminalising women (e.g., on children)

Advisors largely agreed with the description of this theme, noting that the impact of incarceration has specific implications for women (compared with men). Women discussed the need for alternatives to prison to address the underlying drivers of criminal behaviour (e.g., insecure housing, alcohol or drug use as a coping mechanism for trauma, or lack of access to final assistance or employment). Women felt that increased resourcing for community/grassroots organisations that supported the FV needs of criminalised women was likely to be more effective than training police to be more sensitive to their unique circumstances.

9. Secure housing, especially upon release, is vital for women to stay safe from FV

Workshop reflections confirmed that secure housing was a key, overarching theme that is a critical protective factor for women's safety after release from prison. Advisors added that post-release housing should never replicate a prison-like institution, and that provision for housing should always feel separate from the Correctional system to feel safe and supportive.

Enquiry (ii): Conclusions from Lived Experience Advisor Interviews

Our research question for this enquiry was: What do women with lived experiences of FV and of involvement in Victoria's prison system identify as:

   a. The gaps in FV support for women in prison?

   b. Recommendations for improving equity, access, and uptake of FV services currently available to women in prison?

   c. Protective factors that help women stay safe from FV when exiting prison?

In summary, the advisors highlighted several **gaps** associated with FV support for women in prison. These included a need to improve the universal screening for FV (where possible, to be completed by a specialised FV clinician), as well as the need for coordinated support across multiple services that were often siloed (or a better integration across programs/services that are offered). Additionally, difficulties accessing safe and supported housing upon release were underscored.

Women participating in this part of the project generously shared their **recommendations** for improving equity, access, and uptake of the FV supports that are currently available to women in prison in Victoria and more broadly. These included suggestions for delivering tailored and flexible FV support to women in prison and addressing the identified barriers in order to facilitate engagement in these services.

Importantly, the key **protective factors** that help women stay safe from FV when exiting prison include safe and secure housing options, continued access to culturally safe, trauma-informed throughcare or support services, and engagement in safe relationships and supportive communities.

Enquiry (iii) Focus Groups with Workers

Methodology

This section details the research approach used for the next part of the project: namely, the focus groups with workers (Enquiry iii). Following on from the previous enquiries, this part of the project employed primary data collection methods to engage and synthesise the voices of workers who support the family safety needs of women in prison in Victoria.

Ethics Approval

Ethics approval for this part of the project was provided by the Corrections Victoria Research Committee (CVRC) in October 2022 and subsequently by the Justice Human Research Ethics Committee (JHREC) in December 2022. Final Authorization to conduct the research was granted by Corrections Victoria in January 2023.

Eligibility Criteria

Participants were eligible to take part in this part of the project if they i) currently work with women at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre or Tarrengower Prison, and ii) provide some form of education or support to women about FV in the course of their usual work.

Sample

The sample included twelve individuals from eight different services or organisations representing the Department of Justice, The Bouverie Centre, Centre Against Sexual Assault, Anglicare and Drummond Street Services. Eight workers were based at DPFC, whereas three were based at both DPFC and Tarrangower Prisons and one worker was based at Tarrengower only.

Recruitment

Recruitment was supported by the Offender Rehabilitation Unit, Rehabilitation and Reintegration Branch, Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS). The research team had an existing relationship with the Department as part of The Bouverie Centre's work delivering a family therapy program in Victoria's women's prisons. The Department supported dissemination of the focus group invitation (via email) to individuals and team leaders in relevant programs and services operating in the prisons. Where recipients were interested and eligible, they were prompted to click a link in the email invitation that directed them to an online Participant Information Statement and Consent Form. Here, they were able to provide their consent and nominate their preferred focus group session time/s.

Data Collection

Focus groups were conducted over Zoom. We offered two focus group session times to increase the chances that participants could take part. Both sessions were facilitated together by the Chief Investigator (AB) and Lead Project Researcher (ZC). Focus groups were audio-recorded for

transcription purposes. At the beginning of each focus group session, the researchers re-confirmed participant consent and provided a further opportunity for participants to ask any questions. Following the discussion, the researchers checked in with participant wellbeing and provided an opportunity for participants to ask any questions.

Analytic Strategy

Interview recordings were transcribed using standard transcription software with transcripts then verified, edited and subjected to thematic analysis by the Lead Project Researcher (ZC). For each theme, data were collated from each of the two focus group transcripts. The Lead Project Researcher (ZC) led the thematic synthesis and the Chief Investigator (AB) reviewed and contributed to the final list of themes.

Key Findings: Focus Groups with Workers

We report on five core themes (and several subthemes) that were reported in the focus groups. The themes described below reflect the subjective, lived experiences of the workers contributing to this project.

1. Facilitators to women's engagement in FV support or education programs

Facilitators to women's access and engagement in family violence support or education programs in prison included strong program reputation and the ability to provide personalised outcomes for women. Further, group facilitators also played an important role in increasing program uptake and engagement.

2. Barriers to women's access to and engagement with FV programs

Qualitative responses from staff highlighted barriers to both identifying which women need support, as well as practical, structural, and operational barriers to providing access to or engagement with FV programs in prison (e.g., insufficient funding, lack of resources, overstretched staff, long waiting lists and short service contracts).

3. Ability to meet the FV needs of First Nations and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse women

The qualitative responses of prison staff shed light on the challenges and opportunities in meeting the family violence needs of First Nations and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse women in prison.

Staff members who participated in the focus groups felt that First Nations women seemed to receive more adequate support, with prompt engagement, cultural consultants, and modified programs that incorporate Aboriginal art and cultural elements.

Regarding Culturally and Linguistically Diverse women, staff identified cultural considerations such as protectiveness over perpetrators and shame associated with disclosure that may hinder engagement in group settings. Tailoring support programs to address these cultural dynamics is crucial. A notable gap regarding service offerings for women from a Sudanese/African background was identified. Further, language barriers and concerns about interpreters from the same community as the perpetrators further complicate effective communication. The impact of COVID-19 on cultural diversity in prisons was also noted, as travel restrictions resulted in fewer women from overseas countries.

Instances of racism and cultural insensitivity by prison officers were reported as a significant barrier to women engaging. Staff reported hearing frequent racist remarks from officers or observed prison officers denying women an interpreter. Overall, staff felt that there was an overall lack of accountability or follow through after receiving universal cultural safety training.

4. Staff experiences of support with responding to the FV needs of women

Several subthemes within this theme were identified, and are summarised below:

a. **Lack of job certainty and program continuity:** Staff reported facing a significant uncertainty regarding job security and program continuity, which they equated to feeling unsupported in their work, hindering their ability to develop their practice, plan professional development opportunities, and establish strong relationships with colleagues. Staff reported that it becomes challenging to promote their programs amidst the uncertainty of funding, as they cannot provide assurance regarding the ongoing availability of certain programs or services that the women may request.

b. **Role demands:** Staff highlighted the role demands faced by staff members who support and respond to the FV needs of women in prison. Time and capacity constraints emerged as significant challenges, with workers feeling overstretched and under-resourced. Staff highlighted the time pressures of conducting a thorough FV assessment which typically takes an hour or more including paperwork and referrals.

c. **Workplace isolation:** Finally, the layout and scheduling arrangements in prisons, such as separate buildings and different working days, contribute to limited interactions and collaboration among program workers. The lack of opportunity for meaningful conversations and connections creates a sense of isolation within the prison setting, which staff felt could affect longevity and potentially lead to higher turnover rates, highlighting the need for opportunities to debrief with colleagues. Staff felt that the frequency of cross-program meetings were not regular enough and that format could be improved to create greater opportunity for connection and support. Facilitating relationships among staff who work in the same building and on the same day could be more beneficial, although it is rarely feasible.

5. Training and support needs for staff

Staff felt that underlying cultural issues within the prison system needed addressing prior to staff engaging in training opportunities. Specifically, staff raised that there needed to be a cultural shift in the focus from punishment to rehabilitation to establish a culture that prioritises and respects the impact of FV. Further, some of the prison workers expressed feeling unsafe and unsupported at work, which hampered their engagement in training efforts. That said, specific training needs were identified to enhance staff competence in dealing with the complex issues surrounding FV. These included training in:

- Micro-counselling skills for FV conversations.
- Working with individuals with disabilities.
- Meeting the unique cultural needs of First Nations and Vietnamese women.
- Gender-responsive principles.

- Group facilitation skills, along with ongoing supervision for group facilitators.

In one focus group, there was also an expressed desire to be involved in advocacy work, such as participation in independent inquiries or research projects that could allow them to safely share information about human rights violations and raise concerns without fear of repercussions. They felt that this would promote accountability and facilitate improvements in the overall conditions for both staff and the women in prison.

The detailed description of each theme and the specific recommendations provided by workers (ordered by theme) are presented in Supplementary Table 5 (Appendix G; page 74).

Enquiry (iii): Conclusions from Focus Groups with Workers

Overall, the role demands on staff addressing FV needs in women's prisons encompass the need for specialised expertise, time and resource constraints, and the challenges associated with limited funding and capacity. Workers felt that increased support, collaboration, and shared learning opportunities could lead to a greater sense of workplace wellbeing and improve their ability to respond to the FV needs of women in prison.

By adopting a comprehensive approach that combines training, cultural shifts, safety measures, specific skill-building, and opportunities for collaboration and advocacy across programs and services, the training and support needs of staff can be effectively addressed.

Overall Project Findings

The aim of this three-part project was to understand and synthesise current thinking in best practice in FV programs and services for women in the criminal justice system (via a rapid review of the existing literature), and to generate new knowledge about the FV support needs of women with lived experiences of both FV and Victoria's prison system (via a series of interviews with lived experience advisors and focus groups with staff who are supporting the FV needs of women in Victoria's prison system).

The review of existing grey literature (i.e., Enquiry (i) Part b) synthesised a diverse set of contemporary recommendations spanning multiple policy domains, with significant overlap in the themes and recommendations offered by the 12 Australian organisations included. Similar or supporting themes identified via Enquiry (i) also emerged from Enquiries (ii) and (iii), allowing for the triangulation of evidence regarding identified gaps, current protective factors, and improvements to better support the needs of workers delivering FV support to women in prison.

In the table below (Table 3), we provide a visualisation of the **core, aggregated themes** that arose from each of the three enquiries in this project. We indicate which themes arose from which enquiry/ies. Further, themes (and subsequent implications of these findings) are aligned to the key research questions that underpinned each enquiry; namely, what are the:

- Identified gaps in FV support for women in prison?

- Best practice principles for FV support services?

- Protective factors that help women stay safe from FV when exiting prison?

- Staff support needs?

Table 3 shows that almost all themes were supported by multiple enquiries. The replication of findings across both grey literature and the lived experience of women and workers strengthens the research findings by confirming and validating the conclusions of each individual enquiry.

In particular, all three enquiries identified a need for routine FV screening at, or soon after, prison entry, continued improvement in the coordination between service providers, and multiple barriers to engagement in FV services for women in prison. Regarding the need for improved communication, Enquiry (i) found that this was raised as a recommendation by 7 different organisations that engage with women who have lived experience of both FV and incarceration. Lived experiences advisers also emphasised the challenges in navigating multiple services, often requiring them to retell their story. Advisors shared that services designed to assist with information sharing can also be difficult to engage with due to a lack of rapport and trust that needs to be built between the FV worker and the woman over time. Focus groups with workers revealed some instances where throughcare services were not followed-up to provide support to women upon release from prison, highlighting a further area where the coordination between service providers or programs could be improved.

Key Themes Arising from this Project: What did we find?

Aligned with the overarching research questions for this project, Table 3 displays the **aggregated** themes generated from our set of three key enquiries, including which themes arose from which enquiry/ies.

Table 3. **Key Themes Emerging from Three Methods of Enquiry**

Aggregated themes across enquiries	Definition	Enquiry		
		i) Literature review	ii) Advisor interviews	iii) Worker's focus groups
Identified Gaps				
Need to improve FV identification	Consistently provide universal screening for FV, including the assessment and response to multiple needs (e.g., FV *and* housing).	X	X	X
Coordination between service providers	All three enquiries revealed the need to continue to enhance service coordination and throughcare to minimise communication gaps and avoid women having to retell their stories.	X	X	X
Barriers to service engagement	Women and workers report multiple barriers such as short sentences/remand; infrequent or poorly timed service delivery; poor past experiences and distrust in services; high staff turnover; insecure program funding.	X	X	X
Prison as traumatising, retraumatizing, or stigmatizing	Lived experience advisers report that prison replicates power cycles and lack of autonomy experienced by women in violent relationships. Upon community reintegration, women report that criminalisation stigmatises them through bias, discrimination, and community distrust.	X	X	
Decarceration and justice reinvestment	Reinvest prison funding into community programs that address primary factors that increase the likelihood of criminal justice system involvement.	X	X	
Best Practice Principles for FV Support Services				
Tailoring of delivery and mode of FV services	Flexible ways of accessing FV support in prison facilitates engagement. Personalised and tailored outcomes also facilitate engagement for women.		X	X
Culturally specific support	FV support should be developed with, delivered by, and specific to women from the same cultural group.	X	X	X
Gender-responsiveness	FV programs should continue to apply new and updated knowledge of gender expertise.	X		
Trauma-informed support	Trauma plays a central role in women's custodial pathways, and trauma-informed care must be applied across all services.	X	X	X
Involvement of lived experience	Meaningful involvement of lived experience advisors is needed at all levels of program governance, design, and delivery.	X	X	

Aggregated themes across enquiries	Definition	Enquiry		
		i) Literature review	ii) Advisor interviews	iii) Worker's focus groups
Protective Factors Upon Release				
Secure housing, especially upon release	Safe and accessible housing is critical for post-release safety from FV. It is vital to universally assess women's need for housing pre-release, and increase the availability of suitable, medium- to long-term housing post-release.	X	X	
Systemic approaches	Services should incorporate systemic principles, e.g., focus on positive family relationships or regaining custody of children post-release.	X	X	
Staff Support Needs				
Staff training	Continued investment in workforce training and support.	X		X
Support at work	Reduce role demands, improve job certainty and program continuity. Provide Communities of Practice.	X		X

Protective factors for women in custody who have experienced family violence include the continuing availability of tailored, flexible support services that are culturally specific, gender specific and trauma informed. Programs and services that accommodate diverse needs and learning styles are key. As detailed earlier in this report, various programs and practices are provided in the Victorian corrections system to allow culturally specific, gender specific and trauma informed support for women in prison. By continuing to work with a clear understanding of women's cultural experiences and any other needs related to their individual circumstances (such as mental health needs, brain injury, or different learning styles), programs and services can maximise women's healing and resilience in therapeutic and empowering ways. Efforts should continue to be made to take stock of any cultural or other needs (e.g., minority group needs) that may not be currently accounted for in provision of services and supports, and for ongoing adjustments to occur in existing programs continuously provide improved services. Implications of these findings for informing best practice principles in providing FV support for women in prison are described on pages 32-34.

Relational confidence and strong connections to supportive family, kin and allies are critical protective factors for women exiting prison. Family violence programs and services are encouraged to adopt systemic, strengths-based approaches that identify and leverage the safe and supportive connections to family and community that many women have, and to nurture new safe and supportive connections where these are needed. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse women, culture should continue to be seen as a strength to be leveraged in healing and in reducing women's risk of re-experiencing family violence.

Strengths and Limitations

The current findings should be considered in light of the various strengths and inherent limitations of the research. A key strength of this research was the use of multiple methods to draw together findings from the literature as well as from lived experience advisors and the workers who support women in prison in Victoria. Synthesising findings from these key evidence sources provides a nuanced and holistic view that a focus on only one angle or voice can obscure.

Limitations of the research pertain to both project scope and the available evidence in this arena. For example, the findings arising from the literature review are based solely on grey literature rather than peer-reviewed evidence, and this was an inherent limitation of the availability of the literature available for review (i.e., publicly available, peer reviewed evidence that met inclusion criteria for the review). Further, while the Cochrane Rapid Review guidelines suggest limiting database searches to two databases (with the addition of a specialist database for specific topics; Garritty et al., 2020), our search was confined to three databases in Enquiry (i) Part A. This restriction, coupled with our focus solely on research involving female-only prison populations, may have resulted in an incomplete coverage of the available literature. Additionally, the emphasis on evidence syntheses in Enquiry (i) Part A may have inadvertently skewed the lack of findings, particularly given research in this area is still emerging and thus comprehensive syntheses have not yet been conducted. In Enquiry (i) Part B (Grey Literature Search), only the initial 100 results returned from a single search string were synthesised. This approach may have missed relevant sources beyond this cutoff and/or not captured by the chosen search string.

Although aligned within the predetermined project scope, the findings arising from the qualitative investigations are based on small sample sizes. This can impact the generalisability of findings, particularly for systems recommendations. For instance, the lived experience advisors engaged in Enquiry (ii) had been incarcerated for periods ranging between 1- to 5-months. While a significant proportion of women in Victoria are incarcerated for periods of less than 12-months (including those on remand; Department of Justice and Community Safety, 2019), it may mean that the current findings are not generalisable to those women serving longer sentences who may have more opportunity to access available supports.

Taken together, findings inform the following key implications for continued improvement and best practice in family safety support for women in custody, both here in Victoria and more broadly. The suggested practice and policy implications are made in acknowledgment of the range of programs and practices that already exist in the Victorian corrections system and are intended to provide further detail on the areas that the literature, alongside both workers and lived experience advisors, perceive to be working well and the areas that may benefit from further or ongoing attention. Indicative time frames for implementation have been included.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Underpinned by evidence (Table 3) and aligned to the four research questions addressed by this project, The Bouverie Centre advise the Victorian Government to consider the following opportunities to promote the protective factors for women involved in the criminal justice system who have experienced FV. Further, we propose short-, medium- and long-term time horizons in which this work can be undertaken.

1. Addressing Identified Gaps in FV support for Women in Prison

Short-term

1.1 **Routine FV screening at, or soon after, prison entry**.
- Use of a validated, culturally safe and MARAM aligned risk-screening tool and process
- FV screening to be ideally completed with, or followed up by, a specialist FV worker.
- Adjust timing and format of FV screening to meet the needs of different women / groups of women.

1.2 **Explore prison-specific barriers to engagement in support services,** including communication gaps and coordination between prison officers, programs and services and external/community service providers.

Medium-term

1.3 **Further consultation with lived experience advisors to improve general prison processes.** For example, explore opportunities for:

- Further lived experience advocacy and input regarding modifications to prison processes to reduce the potential for traumatisation and re-traumatisation in the prison system.
- A lived experience mentor within the prison to help women to feel more comfortable and safe engaging with a FV service, while also creating meaningful and empowering professional opportunities for the woman providing support.

Longer-term

1.4   **Decarceration and justice reinvestment** to prevent the traumatising, retraumatising, and/or stigmatising experience of incarceration, particularly for the many women who are imprisoned for non-violent crimes and would not pose a threat to community safety:

- Advocate for governmental targets for women's decarceration in Victoria to support a reduction in the women's prison population.
- Advocate for justice reinvestment for women who have experienced family violence.

2. Improving FV Services for Women in Prison

Short-term

2.1.   Ensure continued availability of **tailored, flexible delivery and mode of FV services**. For example, programs that:

- Accommodate trauma and diverse learning needs.
- Have flexibility in the timing of delivery, i.e., can offer support closer to release, provide throughcare upon release, or can be engaged when safety concerns arise.
- Increased frequency of program offerings so that women on short sentences can access them in a timelier way.

2.2.   Ensure **continuous improvement in culturally safe and culturally specific support**.

- Continue to deliver FV programs to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women that have been developed with, continuously improved with, and delivered by First Nations women.
- Explore pathways for First Nations women to become peer support workers or mentors.
- Continue to review and address any service gaps for women from minority cultural or language group backgrounds (e.g., Sudanese women).

Medium-term

2.3.   Prioritise the delivery of existing programs that **gender-responsive, intersectional, and designed with lived experience** in mind at all levels of program governance, design, and delivery.

3. Strengthening Protective Factors that Improve Safety Upon Release from Prison

Short-term

3.1. Continued development of Corrections Victoria (2023) **post-release assessment** pilot to identify the impact of post-release supports in addressing any outstanding transitional needs at the end of a support period. Findings of this project suggest that optimal post-release needs assessment could be extended to include the woman's:

- Need for weather appropriate clothing.
- Need for financial assistance.
- Housing and location requirements (e.g., court location vs available accommodation).
- Work responsibilities (e.g., ability to provide flexible support for women who work full time).
- Caring responsibilities and whether reunification with children is likely to be a goal post-release.
- Disability/accessibility requirements.
- Transport/reliance on PT.
- Access to or awareness of a range of services/resources encompassing housing, crisis relief, food banks, community meals, multicultural events.

3.2. Continued development of programs, services and prison initiatives that incorporate **systemic approaches** that**:**

- Strengthen healthy relationships (e.g., parenting programs, or programs that assisting women to regain custody of their children post-release)
- Address structural and systemic barriers to safety from FV upon release (e.g., housing, employment, education).

Medium- to Longer-term

3.3. Explore opportunities to secure **safe and stable housing** for women who have experienced FV upon exit from prison, including:

- Assessing women's need for housing support prior to release.
- Provision of rent support during and immediately after a period of incarceration.
- Investment in future research to explore the structural and institutional barriers to address the gap in securing and maintaining safe housing for women at the intersection of FV and involvement with the criminal justice system.
- Explore options that could lead to increased capacity for existing services to provide safe, accessible, stable, and affordable housing options for women upon exiting prison.

4. Addressing Support Needs for Staff Delivering Services

Short-term

4.1.   Develop opportunities for **program staff to receive peer support**, for example, the establishment of Communities of Practice.

Medium-term

4.2.   **Explore strategic funding opportunities that promote:**

- Job security for FV prison workers.
- Longevity in the development and delivery of FV prison support programs.

4.3.   **Explore opportunities for additional training and development for prison officers,** in particular the sociological risk factors leading to the incarceration of marginalised groups.

Longer-term

4.4.   Advocate for additional **on-site trained case managers and specialist FV practitioners** that are available to support women who have experienced FV.

Conclusion

The findings of this three-part study provide key evidence that can be used to inform future policies and service development that aims to strengthen the identification, engagement, and access to FV support needs of women who have experienced incarceration. We remind the reader that the study findings are elaborated on in the extensive appendices provided in support of this Final Report.

This work was achieved through a strong, authentic collaboration of lived experience advisors, service providers, stakeholders, and a multi-skilled research team. We trust these findings and their aligned implications provide a solid foundation for next generation policy settings and practice guidelines.

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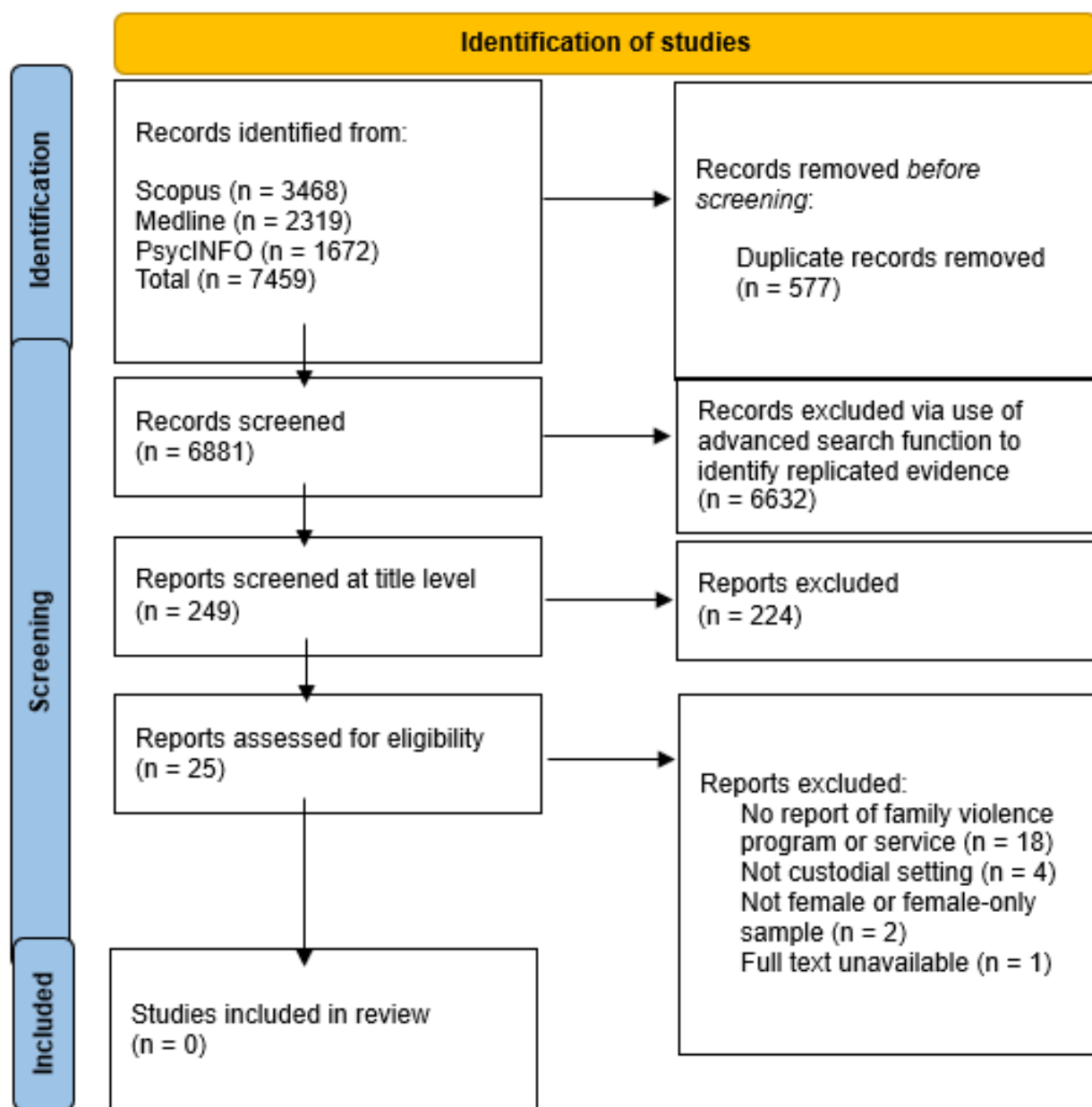
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Appendix B: PRISMA Diagram

Identification of studies

Records identified from:

Scopus (n = 3468)
Medline (n = 2319)
PsycINFO (n = 1672)
Total (n = 7459)

Records removed *before screening*:

Duplicate records removed (n = 577)

Records screened (n = 6881)

Records excluded via use of advanced search function to identify replicated evidence (n = 6632)

Reports screened at title level (n = 249)

Reports excluded (n = 224)

Reports assessed for eligibility (n = 25)

Reports excluded:
No report of family violence program or service (n = 18)
Not custodial setting (n = 4)
Not female or female-only sample (n = 2)
Full text unavailable (n = 1)

Studies included in review (n = 0)

Supplementary Figure 1. PRISMA diagram showing study identification and screening process for replicated evidence review.

Appendix C: Supplementary Table 1 – Records Subjected to Full-Text Review

Supplementary Table 1. List of articles reviewed at full-text level, with key reasons for exclusion, for replicated evidence review.

Author/s, year	Paper title	Reason for exclusion
Abbott et al (2016)	Healthcare delivery for women in prison: a medical record review	No report of family violence program or service
Alirezaei et al (2022)	The Needs of Incarcerated Pregnant Women: A Systematic Review of Literature	No report of family violence program or service
Bartlett et al (2015)	Interventions with women offenders: A systematic review and meta-analysis of mental health gain	No report of family violence program or service
Breuer et al (2021)	The needs and experiences of mothers while in prison and post-release: a rapid review and thematic synthesis	No report of family violence program or service
Bright et al (2022)	Women's experiences of prison-based mental healthcare: a systematic review of qualitative literature	No report of family violence program or service
Christensen et al (2022)	A Systematic Review of Professionals' Views About Community Management Policies for Individuals Convicted of Sexual Offenses	No report of family violence program or service
Edwards et al (2022)	A systematic review of post-release programs for women exiting prison with substance-use disorders: assessing current programs and weighing the evidence	No report of family violence program or service
Gannon et al (2019)	Does specialized psychological treatment for offending reduce recidivism? A meta-analysis examining staff and program variables as predictors of treatment effectiveness	Not female or female-only sample
Henderson et al (2020)	Group interventions for trauma and substance misuse available for women in criminal justice services: A systematic review of the literature	No report of family violence program or service
Karlsson et al (2020)	Sexual Victimization and Mental Illness Prevalence Rates Among Incarcerated Women: A Literature Review	No report of family violence program or service

Author/s, year	Paper title	Reason for exclusion
Kirubarajan et al (2022)	Pregnancy and childbirth during incarceration: A qualitative systematic review of lived experiences	No report of family violence program or service
Madera et al (2012)	Women's intimate partner relationships and post-incarceration treatment for substance abuse and dependence in Puerto Rico: A literature review	No report of family violence program or service
Newbury-Birch et al (2016)	A rapid systematic review of what we know about alcohol use disorders and brief interventions in the criminal justice system	No report of family violence program or service
Nwogu et al (2015)	Effectiveness of Child Advocacy Centers and the multidisciplinary team approach on prosecution rates of alleged sex offenders and satisfaction of non-offending caregivers with allegations of child sexual abuse: A systematic review	Not custodial setting
Pelligrino et al (2015)	Incarcerated black women in the southern USA: A narrative review of STI and HIV risk and implications for future public health research, practice, and policy	No report of family violence program or service
Powell et al (2017)	Mother-infant separations in prison. A systematic attachment-focused policy review	No report of family violence program or service
Rivas et al (2019)	A realist review of which advocacy interventions work for which abused women under what circumstances	No report of family violence program or service
Shorey et al (2014)	Coordinated community response components for victims of intimate partner violence: A review of the literature	Not custodial setting
Simmons et al (2016)	Enhancing the Impact of Family Justice Centers via Motivational Interviewing: An Integrated Review	Not custodial setting
Spangaro et al (2017)	What is the role of health systems in responding to domestic violence? An evidence review	Not custodial setting
Stanton et al (2016)	Mental health issues of women after release from jail and prison: A systematic review	No report of family violence program or service

Author/s, year	Paper title	Reason for exclusion
Stanton et al (2020)	The mental health of mothers currently and formerly incarcerated in jails and prisons: An integrative review on mental health, mental health treatment, and traumatic experiences	No report of family violence program or service
Van Hout et al (2018)	Contemporary women prisoners' health experiences, unique prison health care needs and health care outcomes in sub Saharan Africa: A scoping review of extant literature	No report of family violence program or service
Wilson et al (2021)	Court-mandated interventions for individuals convicted of domestic violence: An updated Campbell systematic review	Not female or female-only sample

Appendix D: Supplementary Table 2 – Detailed Recommendations Arising from the Grey Literature Review, Ordered by Theme.

Supplementary Table 2 provides a detailed overview of the recommendations made by reports or records included in the grey literature review (Enquiry (i) Part B).

In this table, each theme is described and then followed by the list of recommendations included within that theme that were made by the reports included for review. Recommendations are arranged by **i) Prevention Efforts** (with the common aim to *prevent* women entering custodial systems), then **ii) Program Principles** (covering best practice principles for programs and services, where women do enter custodial systems); and finally **iii) Post-release/Throughcare Principles** (which apply to best practice approaches to supporting women when they are exiting custodial systems).

Citations have been provided throughout Supplementary Table 2 to identify the primary source of each recommendation. Further detail and context for the recommendations can be found in the original sources.

Supplementary Table 2. Detailed Recommendations Arising from the Grey Literature Review, Ordered by Theme.

Theme 1. Culturally Specific Support			
Description	**Prevention recommendations**	**Program Principle recommendations**	**Post-release/Throughcare Principle recommendations**
FV programs and services delivered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in prison should be developed with and delivered by First Nations women. Program delivery should be tailored towards Indigenous cultural practices and observances, and particularly to focus on the issues regarding colonisation and a lost sense of identity and culture. The Kunga Stopping Violence Program (KSVP) is an example of a successful program that incorporates these recommendations. The KSVP is run in the Alice Springs Correctional Centre as a voluntary throughcare program for Aboriginal women who have an alleged history of violent offending.	• Prevention interventions that aim to address the gendered drivers of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women should promote women as leaders within their communities. Efforts to prevent violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women should not be limited to work within specific Indigenous communities (State of Victoria [Department of Premier and Cabinet] & the Equality Institute, 2017). • Police training on culturally appropriate responses to FV is needed, including an understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' resistance to police intervention (ANROWS, 2018 & 2020a & 2020b). • An increase in funding is needed for culturally specific services, including Djirra (AWAVA, 2018; State of Victoria (Department of Premier and Cabinet) & the Equality Institute, 2017; Flat Out, 2014; FVPLS Victoria, 2015). • Develop and fund culturally relevant initiatives such as the Kunga Stopping Violence Program, the Miranda Project or the Sisters Inside diversionary program (ANROWS, 2020; Sotiri et al., 2020; Caruana et al., 2021; CIJ, 2021).	• Programs attended by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims/survivors of FV should be culturally safe and holistic. These programs should take a less punitive or restrictive approach to criminalised women (State of Victoria (Department of Premier and Cabinet) & the Equality Institute, 2017; FVPLS Victoria, 2015; KWOOP, 2020). Programs should be based on the concept of Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing (CIJ, 2021). • Programs and services, including those provided by NGOs, police, courts and corrections, must be developed with and delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (ANROWS, 2018; Sotiri et al., 2020; MCRI, 2020). • FV services should have a Reconciliation Action Plan, or an Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework, following guidelines of Reconciliation Australia or following the leadership of local Elders (AWAVA, 2018 & 2020). • Where needed, culturally appropriate literacy and numeracy education for Indigenous women in prison (as	N/A

| | • Use the Aboriginal Justice Agreement to drive reforms relevant to Aboriginal and adequately resource the Koori Justice Unit to do this (CIJ, 2021). | traditional schooling may discourage engagement). | |

<center>**Theme 2. Coordination Between Service Providers**</center>

Description	*Prevention recommendations*	*Program Principle recommendations*	*Post-release/Throughcare Principle recommendations*
		⟶	
Continuity of services, case management, pre-release planning and throughcare are important and worthy of continuous improvement review. This applies to the coordination of inter-agency responses, but also to the different stages of women's experiences with Corrections (i.e., preventative responses, remand, while serving a sentence and importantly, throughcare post-release). FV services should also be available to those on short sentences or on remand.	• Women's Health Tasmania (2017) recommended that the government establish with clarity who has responsibility for co-ordinating post-release services and how these articulate with the Department of Justice responsibilities to enable co-ordinated throughcare beyond Corrective Services into the community. • Interagency connections should be developed, maintained, and supported to address the links between housing, mental health and trauma, and substance use, and their impact on both violence and imprisonment (ANROWS, 2020; KWOOP, 2021; Murdoch Children's Research Institute, 2020). • Relevant information should be shared within Corrections, other agencies, and service providers to avoid duplication and improve individual outcomes (Women's Health Tasmania, 2017).	• FV programs could be strengthened by embedding specialist FV practitioners within prisons, who could support the continuity of FV services via case management, pre-released planning, and post-release support (CIJ, 2021; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, 2021, KWOOP, 2020). • Co-ordinated and consistent services for women should be tailored to each person's assessed needs across Corrections and in the community (ANROWS, 2018; KWOOP, 2020; Women's Health Tasmania, 2017). • Where appropriate, planning and decision-making should involve the individual receiving support to ensure the service meets their needs and the needs of their families, including upon release (ANROWS, 2018; Women's Health Tasmania, 2017). • To the greatest extent possible, the same organisations and people work with and build long-term relationships with individuals in prison and in the community following release (CIJ,	• Post-release support should include the provision of accessible, affordable housing to reflect how fundamental safe housing is to both FV and imprisonment (CIJ, 2021; Sotiri et al., 2020; KWOOP, 2020; State of Victoria (Department of Premier and Cabinet) & the Equality Institute, 2017). • Increase the supply of public housing, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (ANROWS, 2020, CIJ (2021), Sotiri et al., 2020; KWOOP (2020) and Murdoch Children's Research Institute, 2020). • Develop a statewide service which connects all women pre-release to offer ongoing tailored, intensive, long term post-release support (Women's Health Tasmania, 2017). • Community and government agencies should be included as partners to enable services delivered pre-release to continue

		2021; Sotiri et al., 2020; Women's Health Tasmania, 2017).	through to reintegration into the community (Women's Health Tasmania, 2017).
		• Interventions and reintegration strategies should be resourced appropriately, prioritised, targeted and delivered at the right time (Murdoch Children's Research Institute, 2020; Women's Health Tasmania, 2017).	• Services that work with people with long histories of criminal justice system involvement need to operate in the communities in which people are living (Sotiri et al., 2020).
			• Any attempt to develop an integrated or interagency response should not rely on the efforts of only one agency. Service providers should coordinate their responses to women leaving prison at risk of FV (ANROWS, 2018).

Theme 3. Decarceration and Justice Reinvestment

Description	*Prevention recommendations*	*Program Principle recommendations*	*Post-release/Throughcare Principle recommendations*
Decarceration and justice reinvestment approaches focus on primary prevention or early intervention with at-risk groups of the population *before* they are incarcerated. Specifically, decarceration refers to policies that move away from imprisonment as the main punishment for criminal offences, and instead have a greater emphasis on diversion and community-based sentencing. Justice reinvestment is a data-driven approach to improving criminal justice outcomes and expenditure, involving	• Increase funding for preventative strategies such as justice reinvestment that address the role of poverty, trauma and victimisation in women's offending (AWAVA, 2018; Caruana et al, 2021; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, 2021; Sotiri et al., 2020; State of Victoria (Department of Premier and Cabinet) & the Equality Institute, 2017). • Reinvest prison funding in FV measures, including community-based services for women with complex needs (Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, 2021; KWOOP, 2020).	• Establish broad based and preventative strategies to address the drivers of disadvantage and build upon and expand existing initiatives driven by community organisations (Flat Out, 2014; State of Victoria (Department of Premier and Cabinet) & the Equality Institute, 2017). • Build upon broader community prevention strategies, such as schools-based education on healthy relationships informed by non-punitive approaches, consent principles and analysis of gender inequalities (AWAVA, 2018; Flat Out;	N/A

		2014; State of Victoria (Department of Premier and Cabinet) & the Equality Institute, 2017).	
evidence-based understandings of local contexts, circumstances and needs that impact one's involvement within the justice system. Several recommendations called for the Victorian Government to pursue women's decarceration and justice reinvestment approaches, with a focus on structural and community-based solutions. This included sufficient funding to specialist women's services and other generalist services to ensure that all women who are/have experienced violence have access to community-based, preventative services that are competent and responsive to their needs.	• Place a moratorium on growth of prison places for women (Flat Out 2014). Bail reforms to address the substantial growth in the female remand population, consistent with the 'Smart Justice for Women' coalition recommendations (State of Victoria (Department of Premier and Cabinet) & the Equality Institute, 2017). • Provide early legal assistance that is culturally safe, along with specialist FV training for lawyers on the issues facing criminalised women (Flat Out, 2014) • Raise age of criminal responsibility from 10 years to an internationally acceptable level (CIJ, 2021). • Amend bail laws to return to the situation where people charged with non-serious offences are released on bail until their matter is heard by the court (CIJ, 2021). Expand sentencing options by increasing opportunities for courts to impose community-based sanctions and banning short-term, disruptive sentences (CIJ, 2021; Sotiri et al., 2020).	• Change policing practices and develop programs that ensure police divert women charged with low-level offending from prosecution (CIJ, 2021; Good Shephard Australia New Zealand, 2021). • Increase access to services in the community to address the issues that result in women becoming involved in the justice system, including women-specific bail support programs (CIJ, 2021).	

Theme 4. Staff Training			
Description	*Prevention recommendations*	*Program Principle recommendations*	*Post-release/Throughcare Principle recommendations*
A lack of adequate training, specialisation and sensitivity of staff who encounter women who have a lived experience of both incarceration and FV.	• Flat Out (2014) and KWOOP (2020) recommend further training for police and legal professionals (for example, prosecutors, lawyers and magistrates). This could lead to more women being	• Further develop existing initiatives and programs to upskill and support specialist FV lawyers and financial counsellors to deliver frontline services to meet the growing demand	N/A

Significantly more investment needed in training and workforce capacity-building for staff across these areas to address the harm, discrimination and stigmatisation that is experienced by women at the intersect of FV and incarceration.	diverted away from the criminal justice system and instead receiving appropriate FV support. • Training should include information on the nature of domestic, family, and sexual violence; the implementation of sentencing policies; clarity about the rationale for police and court powers in civil law; guidance on key concepts that are relied on in the relevant legislation; and, development of trauma-informed and culturally and gender-sensitive understandings of the dynamics of FV (Flat Out Inc., 2014; KWOOP, 2020). • Create guidance for magistrates on how and when they can dismiss inappropriate applications and/or orders. Women at times may consent to inappropriate orders due to exhaustion from systems abuse (e.g., following endless applications for protection orders by perpetrators), legal and other financial costs resulting from systems abuse, or pressure from the abuser (ANROWS, 2020b; KWOOP, 2020). • Provide training for police on identifying patterns of coercive control to assist them to distinguish coercive controlling violence and violence used in response to ongoing abuse (ANROWS, 2020b, Flat Out Inc., 2014). This could help to prevent police from criminalising the victim of FV by incorrectly identifying them as the perpetrator (ANROWS, 2020b).	of women in prison (Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, 2020; Flat Out Inc., 2014). • Provide universal FV training for staff who work in the legal, women's services, alcohol and other drugs and mental health sectors to address the specific issues experienced by women who have been incarcerated (ANROWS, 2020a; CIJ, 2021; KWOOP, 2020). This should include a focus on the intersections of disadvantage (e.g., being aware of specific issues facing women with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women in LGBTQI+ communities and women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; Flat Out Inc., 2014). • Help staff to recognise the link between FV and behaviours that lead to contact with the criminal justice system, particularly in judicial decision-making and sentencing (ANROWS, 2020a; Flat Out, 2014). • Fund trained case managers and specialist FV practitioners within prisons that are available to support women who have experienced violence (Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, 2020; KWOOP, 2020; State of Victoria (Department of Premier and Cabinet) & the Equality Institute, 2017).	

Theme 5. Gender-responsiveness and Intersectionality

Description	Prevention recommendations	Program Principle recommendations	Post-release/Throughcare recommendations	Principle
Gender expertise is critical when providing specialist FV services to women in prison. A gender-responsive framework attempts to identify needs predictive of reoffending that are specific to women (e.g., depression/anxiety, child abuse, adult victimisation, anger, self-efficacy; Stathopoulos et al., 2012).

Programs that follow gender-responsive principles should continue to emphasise respect and safety in correctional environments and programming; women's relational needs; the interconnections between mental health, substance abuse and trauma; and structural socio-economic marginalisation (Stathopoulos et al., 2012).

An intersectional approach to FV is needed where the dynamics of different factors that make up an individual's or group's identity are acknowledged. This can include the intersections of sexual orientation, gender identity, age, ability, Aboriginality, cultural background, religion, race/ethnicity, or socio-economic status (AWAVA, 2016). Taking an intersectional approach to FV means | • Increase funding for research to identify and address the substantial evidence gaps which impede an evidence-informed, gender-specific service response to address the high rates of violence against women who have experienced incarceration (Murdoch Children's Research Institute, 2020); and the similarities or differences in how sex- or gender-specific service provision is implemented across jurisdictions in Australia (Murdoch Children's Research Institute, 2020). | • Gendered differences should be recognised when designing and implementing prison policies and programs, including transitional support to address the high rates of violence experienced by women who have been incarcerated (ANROWS, 2020; KWOOP, 2020; Women's Health Tasmania, 2017).
• Secure ongoing funding for specialist women's services with demonstrated gender expertise so they can continue their work alongside community-controlled organisations in preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based violence (AWAVA, 2018; Sotiri et al., 2020).
• Develop and implement training for police on gender-responsive principles (ANROWS, 2020).
• Programs should advocate a strengths-based approach that considers violence and abuse, poverty, race, class, and gender inequality as factors shaping women's rehabilitation needs (Stathopoulos et al., 2012). | N/A | |

| identifying how these intersections can lead to increased risk, severity, and/or frequency of experiencing different forms of violence (AWAVA, 2016; Stathopoulos et al., 2012; Women's Health Tasmania, 2017). | | | |

Theme 6. Trauma-informed Care			
Description	*Prevention recommendations*	*Program Principle recommendations*	*Post-release/Throughcare Principle recommendations*
Trauma-informed care and support is needed as a legacy of trauma is typically central to women's offending pathways and treatment needs, and therefore the impacts of trauma needed to be integrated into correctional policy and practice (Strathopoulos et al., 2012).

A trauma-informed approach involves looking at all aspects of programming and service provision though a "trauma lens", not just those directly addressing the impacts of trauma (Strathopoulos et al., 2012). Trauma-informed services do not need to be specifically designed to treat symptoms or syndromes related to trauma, but they are informed about, and sensitive to, trauma-related issues present in survivors (Strathopoulos et al., 2012).

A trauma-informed approach could be widely implemented and used to determine women's needs, such as | • Police and legal professionals should receive training on trauma-informed understandings of FV (ANROWS, 2020). | • Programs and services offered to women should follow the principles of trauma-informed care, including an understanding of trauma and its impacts; promote safety; ensure cultural competence; support control, choice and autonomy; share power and governance; integrative care; promote the knowledge that healing happens in relationships; and, the idea that recovery is possible (State of Victoria (Department of Premier and Cabinet) & the Equality Institute, 2017; Strathopoulos et al., 2012).
• Trauma-informed programs and services that are tailored for women in the justice system and those at risk of involvement should receive secure and ongoing funding for development and implementation. This would include piloting community-based support hubs that are independent of courts and correctional services (CIJ, 2021). | N/A |

therapy, counselling, and mental health support.		• Trauma-informed programs and services should be delivered in a way that does not re-traumatise women (State of Victoria (Department of Premier and Cabinet) & the Equality Institute, 2017). E.g., the practice of routine strip-searching in Victorian women's prisons is retraumatising for many women (Flat Out, 2014; State of Victoria (Department of Premier and Cabinet) & the Equality Institute, 2017).	
Theme 7. Involvement of Lived Experience			
Description	*Prevention recommendations*	*Program Principle recommendations*	*Post-release/Throughcare Principle recommendations*
Genuine collaboration and work with women with lived experience was recommended across the service framework at all levels of program governance, design and delivery (ANROWS, 2020; KWOOP, 2020). The expertise of people who have themselves been to prison is critical in both the design and the delivery of community-based reintegration services (Sotiri et al., 2020).	• Women with lived experience should be involved in participatory action research, which could include preventative pilot programs within community-driven organisations (ANROWS, 2020).	• Women are receptive to people with lived experience – they will respect and listen to a peer who has shared similar issues (Women's Health Tasmania, 2017). Workers and presenters should have authentic knowledge, ideally from lived experience.	• Women's Health Tasmania (2017) recommended facilitation of an ongoing consumer advisory group. This could be expanded from their current small group of three to ensure a diversity of perspectives and to enable representation of women who have exited prison both more recently and longer ago. The consumer group would provide opportunities for women to learn new advocacy and consultation skills, enable peer support and mentoring and support women to share their knowledge of the system with other services and the wider community. • Consumer advisory groups could provide input on the development of future post-release support models.

			The group could be available for services to consult with prior to running information sessions in the prison and could enable services to provide professional development to workers (Women's Health Tasmania, 2017).
Theme 8. Systemic Approaches			
Description	*Prevention recommendations*	*Program Principle recommendations*	*Post-release/Throughcare Principle recommendations*
Organisations identified a need for service delivery that incorporates systemic principles and advocacy, such as programs that focus on improving inter-personal relationships with family and other positive social networks. Positive social connections are a significant factor in helping women to move away from factors that could lead to further criminalisation and instead help them to create a new identify (Women's Health Tasmania, 2017).	• Greater emphasis is needed on whole-of-family and whole-of-community approaches to FV programs, including early intervention for teenagers, in recognition of the effects of intergenerational trauma.	• Women in prison are more likely than males to have other parental or carer responsibilities. Parenting programs in prison could provide healthy models for maintaining parent–child relationships as well as support for mothers and children. Such initiatives could include building relationships with the extended family or enabling teleconferencing programmes (State of Victoria (Department of Premier and Cabinet) & the Equality Institute, 2017). • Service delivery should include a significant advocacy component that addresses structural barriers and advocates systemically for change when this is required (for instance in the case of discriminatory employment practices; Sotiri et al., 2020).	• A systemic focus should include facilitation of reconnection with children upon release and support around parenting (ANROWS, 2020).

Appendix E: Supplementary Table 3 – Grey Literature Review References Ordered via Theme

Supplementary Table 3. Grey literature review references ordered via theme.

Reference			
Title	**Org/Author**	**Year**	**Retrieved from**
Theme 1. Support should be culturally specific			
Submission to the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence	Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria (FVPLS Victoria)	2015	https://djirra.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/FVPLS-Victoria-submission-to-Royal-Commission-FINAL-15Jul15.pdf
The forgotten victims: Prisoner experience of victimisation and engagement with the criminal justice system: Key findings and future directions	Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS)	2018	https://www.anrows.org.au/publication/the-forgotten-victims-prisoner-experience-of-victimisation-and-engagement-with-the-criminal-justice-system-key-findings-and-future-directions/
Women's imprisonment and domestic, family, and sexual violence: Research synthesis	Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS)	2020	https://www.anrows.org.au/publication/womens-imprisonment-and-domestic-family-and-sexual-violence/
Accurately identifying the "person most in need of protection" in domestic and family violence law: Key findings and future directions	Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS)	2020	https://www.anrows.org.au/project/accurately-identifying-the-person-most-in-need-of-protection-in-domestic-and-family-violence-law/
Position Paper on the development of the Fourth Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children.	Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA)	2018	https://awava.org.au/2018/10/08/uncategorized/position-paper-fourth-action-plan
Good practice principles in addressing sexual and gender-based violence: Drawing on the unique practice model of specialist women's services	Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA)	2020	https://awava.org.au/2020/12/09/best-practice-resources-2/good-practice-principles-in-addressing-sexual-and-gender-based-violence
Leaving custody behind: Foundations for safer communities and a gender-informed criminal justice systems	Caruana, C., Campbell, E., Bissett, T & Ogilvie, K. (Centre for Innovative Justice, RMIT University, Melbourne)	2021	https://cij.org.au/cms/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/leaving-custody-behind-issues-paper-july-2021-.pdf

Leaving custody behind: A fact sheet on drivers and alternatives to women's incarceration.	Centre for Innovative Justice, RMIT University, Melbourne	2021	https://cij.org.au/cms/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/leaving-custody-behind-fact-sheet_final.pdf
CRC Submission to the House Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs – Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence.	Sotiri et al. Community Restorative Centre (CRC)	2020	https://www.crcnsw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/2020_CRC_FDV_SUBMISSION_24_JULY.pdf
'Family Violence and Criminalised Women', Submission to Royal Commission into Family Violence.	Flat Out Inc	2014	http://www.flatout.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Flat-Out-Submission-RCFV-FINAL.pdf
Imprisonment and domestic, family and sexual violence.	Keeping Women Out of Prison Coalition (KWOOP)	2020	https://www.sydneycommunityfoundation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/KWOOP-PS-No-3-DFV-Final_15Oct20.pdf
Family Violence Primary Prevention: Building a knowledge base and identifying gaps for all manifestations of family violence.	State of Victoria (Department of Premier and Cabinet) & the Equality Institute	2017	https://www.equalityinstitute.org/media/pages/projects/example-project-c/3aec0afe3e-1595397560/dpc_eqi_fv_report.pdf
Submission to the House Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry into Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence – Preventing violence against women who have experienced incarceration.	Murdoch Children's Research Institute (MCRI)	2020	https://mspgh.unimelb.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/3505937/Justice-Health_Submission_Family-domestic-and-sexual-violence.pdf
Theme 2. Coordination between service providers / improve throughcare			
The forgotten victims: Prisoner experience of victimisation and engagement with the criminal justice system: Key findings and future directions	Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS)	2018	https://www.anrows.org.au/publication/the-forgotten-victims-prisoner-experience-of-victimisation-and-engagement-with-the-criminal-justice-system-key-findings-and-future-directions/
Women's imprisonment and domestic, family, and sexual violence: Research synthesis	Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS)	2020	https://www.anrows.org.au/publication/womens-imprisonment-and-domestic-family-and-sexual-violence/
Accurately identifying the "person most in need of protection" in domestic and family violence law: Key findings and future directions	Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS)	2020	https://www.anrows.org.au/project/accurately-identifying-the-person-most-in-need-of-protection-in-domestic-and-family-violence-law/

Leaving custody behind: A fact sheet on drivers and alternatives to women's incarceration.	Centre for Innovative Justice, RMIT University, Melbourne	2021	https://cij.org.au/cms/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/leaving-custody-behind-fact-sheet_final.pdf
CRC Submission to the House Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs – Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence.	Sotiri et al. Community Restorative Centre (CRC)	2020	https://www.crcnsw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/2020_CRC_FDV_SUBMISSION_24_JULY.pdf
Imprisonment and domestic, family and sexual violence.	Keeping Women Out of Prison Coalition (KWOOP)	2020	https://www.sydneycommunityfoundation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/KWOOP-PS-No-3-DFV-Final_15Oct20.pdf
Family Violence Primary Prevention: Building a knowledge base and identifying gaps for all manifestations of family violence.	State of Victoria (Department of Premier and Cabinet) & the Equality Institute	2017	https://www.equalityinstitute.org/media/pages/projects/example-project-c/3aec0afe3e-1595397560/dpc_eqi_fv_report.pdf
Submission to the House Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry into Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence – Preventing violence against women who have experienced incarceration.	Murdoch Children's Research Institute (MCRI)	2020	https://mspgh.unimelb.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/3505937/Justice-Health_Submission_Family-domestic-and-sexual-violence.pdf
Just Support Project Report – Throughcare for women exiting Mary Hutchinson Women's Prison: Towards a gender responsive approach.	Women's Health Tasmania	2017	https://www.womenshealthtas.org.au/sites/default/files/resources/just-support-project-report/justsupportprojectreport.pdf
Theme 3. Support provided should follow gender-responsive principles			
Addressing women's victimization histories in custodial settings.	Stathopoulos et al. (Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault, Australian Government)	2012	https://aifs.gov.au/resources/practice-guides/addressing-womens-victimisation-histories-custodial-settings
Women's imprisonment and domestic, family, and sexual violence: Research synthesis	Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS)	2020	https://www.anrows.org.au/publication/womens-imprisonment-and-domestic-family-and-sexual-violence/
Accurately identifying the "person most in need of protection" in domestic and family violence law: Key findings and future directions	Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS)	2020	https://www.anrows.org.au/project/accurately-identifying-the-person-most-in-need-of-protection-in-domestic-and-family-violence-law/

CRC Submission to the House Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs – Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence.	Sotiri et al. Community Restorative Centre (CRC)	2020	https://www.crcnsw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/2020_CRC_FDV_SUBMISSION_24_JULY.pdf
Imprisonment and domestic, family and sexual violence.	Keeping Women Out of Prison Coalition (KWOOP)	2020	https://www.sydneycommunityfoundation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/KWOOP-PS-No-3-DFV-Final_15Oct20.pdf
Just Support Project Report – Throughcare for women exiting Mary Hutchinson Women's Prison: Towards a gender responsive approach.	Women's Health Tasmania	2017	https://www.womenshealthtas.org.au/sites/default/files/resources/just-support-project-report/justsupportprojectreport.pdf
Submission to the House Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry into Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence – Preventing violence against women who have experienced incarceration.	Murdoch Children's Research Institute (MCRI)	2020	https://mspgh.unimelb.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/3505937/Justice-Health_Submission_Family-domestic-and-sexual-violence.pdf
Theme 4. Staff training			
Women's imprisonment and domestic, family, and sexual violence: Research synthesis	Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS)	2020a	https://www.anrows.org.au/publication/womens-imprisonment-and-domestic-family-and-sexual-violence/
Accurately identifying the "person most in need of protection" in domestic and family violence law: Key findings and future directions	Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS)	2020b	https://www.anrows.org.au/project/accurately-identifying-the-person-most-in-need-of-protection-in-domestic-and-family-violence-law/
Leaving custody behind: A fact sheet on drivers and alternatives to women's incarceration.	Centre for Innovative Justice, RMIT University, Melbourne	2021	https://cij.org.au/cms/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/leaving-custody-behind-fact-sheet_final.pdf
CRC Submission to the House Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs – Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence.	Sotiri et al. Community Restorative Centre (CRC)	2020	https://www.crcnsw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/2020_CRC_FDV_SUBMISSION_24_JULY.pdf
Imprisonment and domestic, family and sexual violence.	Keeping Women Out of Prison Coalition (KWOOP)	2020	https://www.sydneycommunityfoundation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/KWOOP-PS-No-3-DFV-Final_15Oct20.pdf
Family Violence Primary Prevention: Building a knowledge	State of Victoria (Department of Premier and	2017	https://www.equalityinstitute.org/media/pages/projects/example-project-c/3aec0afe3e-1595397560/dpc_eqi_fv_report.pdf

base and identifying gaps for all manifestations of family violence.	Cabinet) & the Equality Institute		
Submission to the Inquiry into family, domestic and sexual violence: Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs.	Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand	2020	https://goodshep.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/fdsv-inquiry-good-shepherd-submission-final-20200724.pdf
'Family Violence and Criminalised Women', Submission to Royal Commission into Family Violence.	Flat Out Inc	2014	http://www.flatout.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Flat-Out-Submission-RCFV-FINAL.pdf
Theme 5. Decarceration and justice reinvestment			
Position Paper on the development of the Fourth Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children.	Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA)	2018	https://awava.org.au/2018/10/08/uncategorized/position-paper-fourth-action-plan
Leaving custody behind: A fact sheet on drivers and alternatives to women's incarceration.	Centre for Innovative Justice, RMIT University, Melbourne	2021	https://cij.org.au/cms/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/leaving-custody-behind-fact-sheet_final.pdf
Leaving custody behind: Foundations for safer communities and gender-informed criminal justice systems	Centre for Innovative Justice, RMIT University	2021	https://cij.org.au/research-projects/leaving-custody-behind-foundations-for-safer-communities-and-gender-informed-criminal-justice-systems/
CRC Submission To The House Standing Committee On Social Policy And Legal Affairs - Family, Domestic And Sexual Violence	Sotiri et al. Community Restorative Centre, NSW	2020	https://www.crcnsw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/2020_CRC_FDV_SUBMISSION_24_JULY.pdf
Inquiry into Victoria's Criminal Justice System. Parliament of Victoria Legal and Social Issues Committee.	Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand	2021	https://goodshep.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Good-Shepherd-submission-Inquiry-into-Victorias-Criminal-Justice-System-17-Sept-2021.pdf
Imprisonment and domestic, family and sexual violence.	Keeping Women Out of Prison Coalition (KWOOP)	2020	https://www.sydneycommunityfoundation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/KWOOP-PS-No-3-DFV-Final_15Oct20.pdf
'Family Violence and Criminalised Women', Submission to Royal Commission into Family Violence.	Flat Out Inc	2014	http://www.flatout.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Flat-Out-Submission-RCFV-FINAL.pdf
Family Violence Primary Prevention: Building a knowledge	State of Victoria (Department of Premier and	2017	https://www.equalityinstitute.org/media/pages/projects/example-project-c/3aec0afe3e-1595397560/dpc_eqi_fv_report.pdf

base and identifying gaps for all manifestations of family violence.	Cabinet) & the Equality Institute		

Theme 6. Support provided should be trauma-informed			
Addressing women's victimization histories in custodial settings.	Stathopoulos et al. (Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault, Australian Government)	2012	https://aifs.gov.au/resources/practice-guides/addressing-womens-victimisation-histories-custodial-settings
Accurately identifying the "person most in need of protection" in domestic and family violence law: Key findings and future directions	Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS)	2020	https://www.anrows.org.au/project/accurately-identifying-the-person-most-in-need-of-protection-in-domestic-and-family-violence-law/
Leaving custody behind: Foundations for safer communities and gender-informed criminal justice systems	Centre for Innovative Justice, RMIT University	2021	https://cij.org.au/research-projects/leaving-custody-behind-foundations-for-safer-communities-and-gender-informed-criminal-justice-systems/
'Family Violence and Criminalised Women', Submission to Royal Commission into Family Violence.	Flat Out Inc	2014	http://www.flatout.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Flat-Out-Submission-RCFV-FINAL.pdf
CRC Submission To The House Standing Committee On Social Policy And Legal Affairs - Family, Domestic And Sexual Violence	Sotiri et al. Community Restorative Centre, NSW	2020	https://www.crcnsw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/2020_CRC_FDV_SUBMISSION_24_JULY.pdf
Family Violence Primary Prevention: Building a knowledge base and identifying gaps for all manifestations of family violence.	State of Victoria (Department of Premier and Cabinet) & the Equality Institute	2017	https://www.equalityinstitute.org/media/pages/projects/example-project-c/3aec0afe3e-1595397560/dpc_eqi_fv_report.pdf
Theme 7. Involvement of lived experience			
The forgotten victims: Prisoner experience of victimisation and engagement with the criminal justice system: Key findings and future directions	Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS)	2018	https://www.anrows.org.au/publication/the-forgotten-victims-prisoner-experience-of-victimisation-and-engagement-with-the-criminal-justice-system-key-findings-and-future-directions/
Women's imprisonment and domestic, family, and sexual violence: Research synthesis	Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS)	2020	https://www.anrows.org.au/publication/womens-imprisonment-and-domestic-family-and-sexual-violence/

CRC Submission To The House Standing Committee On Social Policy And Legal Affairs - Family, Domestic And Sexual Violence	Sotiri et al. Community Restorative Centre, NSW	2020	https://www.crcnsw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/2020_CRC_FDV_SUBMISSION_24_JULY.pdf
Imprisonment and domestic, family and sexual violence.	Keeping Women Out of Prison Coalition (KWOOP)	2020	https://www.sydneycommunityfoundation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/KWOOP-PS-No-3-DFV-Final_15Oct20.pdf
Just Support Project Report – Throughcare for women exiting Mary Hutchinson Women's Prison: Towards a gender responsive approach.	Women's Health Tasmania	2017	https://www.womenshealthtas.org.au/sites/default/files/resources/just-support-project-report/justsupportprojectreport.pdf
Theme 8. Systemic approaches			
Women's imprisonment and domestic, family, and sexual violence: Research synthesis	Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS)	2020	https://www.anrows.org.au/publication/womens-imprisonment-and-domestic-family-and-sexual-violence/
Family Violence Primary Prevention: Building a knowledge base and identifying gaps for all manifestations of family violence.	State of Victoria (Department of Premier and Cabinet) & the Equality Institute	2017	https://www.equalityinstitute.org/media/pages/projects/example-project-c/3aec0afe3e-1595397560/dpc_eqi_fv_report.pdf
CRC Submission To The House Standing Committee On Social Policy And Legal Affairs - Family, Domestic And Sexual Violence	Sotiri et al. Community Restorative Centre, NSW	2020	https://www.crcnsw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/2020_CRC_FDV_SUBMISSION_24_JULY.pdf
Just Support Project Report – Throughcare for women exiting Mary Hutchinson Women's Prison: Towards a gender responsive approach.	Women's Health Tasmania	2017	https://www.womenshealthtas.org.au/sites/default/files/resources/just-support-project-report/justsupportprojectreport.pdf

Appendix F: Supplementary Table 4 – Themes, subthemes, descriptions, and recommendations arising from Enquiry (ii), the series of interviews and subsequent workshop with lived experience advisors.

Supplementary Table 4. Detailed themes, subthemes, descriptions, and recommendations arising from Enquiry (ii), the series of interviews and subsequent workshop with lived experience advisors.

	Theme	Subtheme	Description	Recommendations
1	Gaps in identification of FV need		• Advisors feel that the need for FV support is not routinely screened for while women are in prison. • Advisors felt that the onus is on women to seek support, in context of multiple barriers. Women are not always offered FV programs or services even when they self-identify this need. • Many women are unable to identify that they have experienced FV and therefore direct questions may be needed. • There are accessibility issues related to the identification of FV support needs. For example, women who have acquired brain injuries or limited literacy skills face challenges in accessing services, and options should be provided for those who require assistance with paperwork.	• Have a safe and trusted person ask specific questions about safety issues and need for FV support at/near prison entry. This could be followed up by two or three scheduled appointments over a couple of weeks while settling in. This was preferred over completing a form, which can feel alienating. • Where possible, provide clear pathways for women to safely and confidentially identify lived experiences of FV and their need for support prior to prison entry, so that modifications to the intake process can occur (e.g., alternatives to strip searching). Alternatively, the intake process (either to the prison or with a new case manager upon entry to a new unit) could be an opportunity to screen for FV support needs.
2	Prison as retraumatising, or directly traumatising		• Many incarcerated women have experienced trauma, and for women who have previously experienced FV, prison can be a retraumatising experience. • Advisors noted that prison can be directly traumatising, too. The experience of incarceration is often traumatic in its own right, even for women who may not have previously experienced trauma. • Advisors felt that prison processes such as strip searches, use of isolation, being on camera, separation from children, overly authoritarian prison staffers, and removal of individual freedoms are dehumanising and replicate the cycles of power, control and lack of autonomy that are experienced by women in violent relationships. • Despite the trauma training that is offered for custodial staff in Victoria, advisors noted that prison institutions	• Ensure continued availability of alternative processes for survivors of FV, including using body-scan technology rather than strip searching. • Ensure timely provision of medicine and healthcare. • Ensure adequate and timely access to treatment for alcohol and other drug withdrawal, where needed.

	Theme	Subtheme	Description	Recommendations
			are at risk of perpetuating violence: thus many women cannot heal from previous experiences of violence while feeling unsafe in prison. • Being incarcerated can remove previous coping mechanisms (e.g., alcohol use), leading to increased distress. There is also a lack of access to adequate treatment for alcohol and other drug withdrawal. • Advisors noted that basic healthcare needs are often not met. Women reported that they were forced to wait for unreasonable lengths of time for basic goods such as water, sanitary items, or medicine.	
3	Prison as stigmatising		• Barriers to post-release reintegration exist due to significant bias, discrimination, stigmatisation, and distrust from the community due to women's criminal history. • Experiences of incarceration make it difficult to gain meaningful employment, access adequate financial support and access some FV services. Some FV workers have limited experience working with marginalised communities, lack rapport with criminalised women and do not understand the multiple complexities of these situations. This can leave women feeling judged, isolated, and disconnected from their communities. • Women can become experts of managing their own situations within violent relationships and are frequently doing their own assessments of risk in these situations. The fact that this may not be recognised by the service system can add another level of perceived stigma whereby women feel disempowered and reluctant to disclose information when the outcomes are unknown (e.g., when there may be statutory involvement).	• Prioritise efforts to reduce stigma among communities, employers and services. • Continue to equip FV workers and services with skills and experience for sensitively working with marginalised communities including those who have experiences of incarceration.
4	Challenges in navigating multiple services		• Many women need to simultaneously engage with multiple services. This can be "triggering" as it requires women to retell their story multiple times, either to different FV services or across other services (e.g.,	• A need for support in coordinating, navigating and advocating across multiple services, particularly upon release or when reunification with children was involved. • Adequate and coordinated community supports could reduce recidivism, and improved communication across

Theme	Subtheme	Description	Recommendations
		Child Protection, Corrections, alcohol and other drug services). - Communication breakdowns occur across services, sometimes causing women to miss appointments and leading to a sense of 'referral fatigue'. Women are often left feeling a sense of 'organisational abandonment', or as if they are 'fending for themselves'. - Even services set up as solutions to women having to retell their story (e.g., the Orange Door) make women feel they are in a game of 'ping pong' due to the lack of rapport. It is not just about retelling the story; it is the experience of not being heard. - Retelling stories can mean that women become somewhat 'detached' to their story, meaning they feel the emotion is lost when seeking support (and women may be perceived as less affected by their situation than they truly are).	services could increase women's sense of control/autonomy. - A primary FV support worker may be helpful for advocacy and coordination across services. - Increase overall resourcing of FV services.
5	FV services not identifying multiple needs		- FV support does not always address multiple, complex needs. - Services are often siloed, which may for example mean that a woman is supported for her substance use needs, but the service fails to identify her as a survivor of FV. - The misidentification or misunderstanding of needs can lead to a 'ripple effect' across the legal system (e.g., across interactions with police, child protection, magistrates, bail laws etc). - Drug use is often not seen as a coping mechanism or symptom of trauma, and therefore not treated as such.	- Equip services with nuanced understanding of women's complex needs across FV, child protection and alcohol and other drug use. - Support FV workers to be sensitive to the multiple complexities involved with transitioning back to community post-release. - Need for holistic FV support that includes housing and 'core essentials' first (not just straight to therapy). - Workers with throughcare services to consider assessment of client wellbeing during daily 'check-in' phone calls (rather than just assessing practical needs). - Women need to be directly prompted about what support is available.
6	Tailoring and flexibility of delivery and mode of FV services is needed		- Flexible ways of accessing FV support are needed (e.g., group sessions, one-to-one sessions, phone support and reading materials). - Sometimes FV support can feel like something to look forward to.	Informal supports may also be important sources of advocacy (e.g., family members or lived experience mentors). Women serving longer sentences could be offered a mentorship role to increase their sense of purpose and empowerment. Note that mentorship roles are offered in the LFFV program, but there have been challenges with locating appropriate women who are in

Theme	Subtheme	Description	Recommendations
		• Group work can promote safety and encourage learning. • FV support is sometimes withdrawn if an appointment is missed (which is often due to operational constraints within the prison and is out of the control of the woman herself). • FV programs need to be tailored (e.g., culturally specific, accessible and inclusive). FV support programs should be integrated, accessible and delivered within the prison. Services provided directly within the prison are generally more beneficial than phone support.	custody for a requisite period of time (given short periods of incarceration for many). • While there is a significant amount of information and support provided to remandees from dedicated Assessment and Transition Coordinators, Remand Program Facilitators and ATLAS programs, advisors feel that more information about available supports could be provided during the orientation period (within the first week of sentencing). Alternatively, pamphlets could be provided to inform women of the range of services that are available. • Transitional links are currently made through various points such as ATCs and Good Shepherd, with referrals to The Orange Door upon release, but more continuity of FV support is desired by women pre- and post-release. Additional links (and potentially more advertising of existing ones) made by programs and services to different community-based programs post-release could be beneficial.
Tailoring and flexibility of delivery and mode of FV services is needed	Group-work	• Group work can feel safer and more normalising than individual work for criminalised women. Group work allows women to 'hear each other's stories', share information and knowledge, and learn from one another. Disclosure to another woman in prison supports empathy, compassion and understanding. This can be healing for women who have experienced FV. • Prison can be a much more supportive environment than often depicted, where peer support among women is concerned. Unfortunately, prison rules can impede women's ability to properly support each other, e.g., restrictions on hugging and consoling.	• Group programs for FV support could feature alternative therapeutic modalities (e.g., art therapy). FV support could include self-love or self-care activities to build purpose, belonging and connection to other women. • Group-work could be facilitated through a 'mentoring' position for a woman on a longer-sentence. This could build trust, rapport, purpose, and self-worth for women in prison to facilitate the groups as a paid position.
Tailoring and flexibility of delivery and mode of FV services is needed	Throughcare support	• Exit from prison can be a particularly vulnerable time, with women 'leaving with the clothes on their back', feeling 'isolated and lonely', having 'nowhere to go' and feeling like they are at 'rock bottom'. • Post-release is often overwhelming while women attempt to transition back to the community while also	• Prior to release, women's basic needs for housing, weather appropriate clothing, and financial aid should be assessed and supported. • Women should be provided with a list of services/resources: housing, crisis relief, food banks, community meals, multicultural events.

Theme	Subtheme	Description	Recommendations
		navigating multiple services and appointments, reunifying with children/family, organizing housing, finances, and food supplies. • Throughcare support is not routinely provided to all women but is often extremely helpful. This can support women's transport needs, basic supplies, mobile phone use, etc. • More social/emotional forms of throughcare support would also be beneficial, such as having someone to 'check in with' or call during a crisis. • Women need continuity of FV support pre- and post-release. Linking women in with support services before they exit prison is particularly important, given the vulnerabilities associated with the post-release period. • Capacity for outreach is essential. Ideally, women are provided with a single point of contact while inside, who is then also available during the transition back to the community.	• Resources could be developed that increase connections between people with similar experiences. A list of services could be provided to women either at intake or approaching release (not at the point of release as this is too busy and stressful), with a pre-release follow up for someone to go through it with them. • Provisions for lived experience mentors, post-release, to provide emotional support and reassurance. • Optimal post-release needs assessment to include location (e.g., court location vs accommodation), work responsibilities (e.g., ability to provide flexible support for women who work full time), caring responsibilities and whether reunification with children is likely to be a goal post-release), disability/accessibility requirements, transport/reliance on PT, etc. Note that there is currently a post-release assessment pilot underway by CV (2023) to identify the impact of post-release supports in addressing any outstanding transitional needs at the end of a support period.
	Tailoring and flexibility of delivery and mode of FV services is needed	Culturally specific support	• Good level of awareness of programs and services in the prisons that are specific to First Nations women or Vietnamese women. This is important, particularly given potential cultural differences in the perception of FV and language barriers. • Overall, women who access culturally specific support seem to have a more positive experience than the other women we spoke to. They found the programs more accessible (e.g., via liaison officers), supportive, and tailored to their needs.	• Culturally specific supports for Sudanese women could be improved e.g., employing a Sudanese Liaison Officer. • Overall accessibility to services in different languages is essential.
8	Multiple barriers to engagement with services (in prison and post-release)	Short periods of incarceration	• Short sentences or periods of remand increase the difficulty in accessing FV support. • Some women miss out on FV support due to groups being run infrequently (e.g., once every 4-8 weeks). Services are sometimes cancelled if not enough women enrol. Further, women are sometimes reluctant	• Timing of FV support offerings is important. Some women feel the best time to be offered support is after the first week, but within the first few weeks (acknowledging that everyone will have different needs). • Increase the frequency of FV service offerings so that women on short sentences can access them in a

Theme	Subtheme	Description	Recommendations
		to do much in the first week in prison as it is a difficult time of transition. • Health and wellbeing are primary concerns and will affect women's engagement with programs during short stays. In the first few weeks, women do not feel like engaging in services if they are not feeling well (e.g., from substance withdrawal).	timelier way. Access to services for women on remand should also be increased. • Removal of quotas for FV support groups. • Fund dedicated FV workers to be consistently available on-site within the prison.
Multiple barriers to engagement with services (in prison and post-release)	Operational barriers	• Significant operational barriers (made worse by COVID-19) include limited connectivity to supports – e.g., no internet, phones hard to access and women found it difficult to get adequate information about the services provided (unless it was via word-of-mouth). • Remand team is often under-resourced in terms of being able to provide FV referrals: there is a lack of paperwork, and these workers are instead working off their own knowledge. • Women are excluded from some FV-services while incarcerated, creating challenges in organising community support pre-release. • Overall, women are not provided with enough information about available FV services (either in-prison or in the community). This can lead to multiple intake assessments within and across community services before support is offered.	• FV support programs should be integrated, accessible and delivered within the prison. This should be followed by coordinated throughcare support specific to women's goals and needs. • Address resourcing of support teams within prison, including remand team.
Multiple barriers to engagement with services (in prison and post-release)	Distrust in services and workers	• Some women feel a sense of distrust and a lack of rapport with prison workers or FV-support workers. This is particularly evident for women with previous experience with child protection services. • Some prison officers are described as unhelpful or disinterested in women's basic healthcare needs. • High staff turnover including the allocation of new case managers every time women move units leads to a barrier in rapport building/trust. • Some women identified a pre-existing bias about the programs delivered in prison based on prior experiences and word of mouth with other women inside. Many women have had negative past	• Need to establish relational trust before expecting progress. Important for support services to feel safe and welcoming. Could be useful to have a fresh, new approach delivered by a new service provider. • Despite the availability of the Family Engagement Service and various parenting programs across both prisons, advisors felt that more could be done here. Services could focus further on capacity building for women inside – i.e., for women who are parents, reunification with children is likely to be a goal post-release. • Lived experience involvement in service delivery is important for both women providing and receiving support. A lived experience mentor within the prison

	Theme	Subtheme	Description	Recommendations
			experiences, do not feel safe and do not have trust in workers or programs. • In the community, women's sense of distrust can be a barrier such that the surveillance and digital footprint required at some community FV services are likely to be a barrier for criminalized women to access (e.g., women might be worried about child protection involvement). • Criminalised women may experience community/grassroots organizations as less judgmental.	could help women to feel more comfortable and safe engaging with a service, while also creating meaningful and empowering professional opportunities for the woman providing support. Ideally, the lived experience mentor could continue their support post-release given they have already built rapport and trust with the women. • Grassroots organisations that use less tracking, data collection and storage may be preferable to criminalised women seeking help for FV, when compared to larger government organisations e.g., Orange Door, who women perceive as having 'too many clients' and not enough time for the workers to build rapport with the women. • Develop transparent and documented models of care with a focus on 'what works'.
		Not enough information provided	Many women do not feel they are provided with enough information about the FV services available within the prison, or information that is being provided at suitable times. Information about programs often shared via word of mouth. Some women feel they received more FV support from their peers in prison, rather than formal supports. Increased knowledge of available services could help criminalized women to heal, grow, develop a sense of belonging.	• Resources could be further developed to improve access to and knowledge of services both within the prison and in the community. • Develop a printout of service providers within the community to provide information about throughcare support. • Resources for policymakers and funders could include case studies that communicate the emotional impact of these experiences.
7	Legal structures and processes are not sensitive to specific needs of women or systemic impacts of criminalising women (e.g., on children)	Laws	• There are a range of difficulties across legal structures and processes specific to the needs of women. For many women, criminal behaviour is a result of sociological or psychological issues, such as insecure housing, coping with trauma via substance use, or lack of access to financial assistance or employment. Women need alternatives to prison to address the underlying drivers of criminal behaviour. • The impact of incarceration has specific legal implications for women, given that many women are caregivers. Being separated from children during	• Training of police unlikely to be effective to support FV needs of criminalized women. Instead – increase resourcing to community/grassroots organizations that support the FV needs of criminalized women.

	Theme	Subtheme	Description	Recommendations
			custodial stays can be traumatic for both the woman and her child. • Of note, amendments to bail laws introduced in 2018 impacted many women who needed to demonstrate "exceptional circumstances" to avoid custody, leading to increased custodial sentences.	
		Systems and processes	• Incarceration can lead to difficulties in accessing FV support on release. For example, if a woman has been serving a custodial sentence, the period between last incident of FV may look like the perpetrator has not been violent for some time. • Financial support can be difficult to access upon release. For example, if someone is released on a Friday, they may not be able to access Centrelink support until the following Monday. • The need to attend court can make it difficult to apply for certain legal protections for FV while incarcerated. For example, some women may have preferred a safe contact order rather than an IVO due to co-parenting responsibilities, but it may not be to make the application while in prison.	• If Centrelink staff are issuing a crisis payment for someone who has just been released from prison, then they also need to disclose or assess what else that person could be eligible for e.g., suggesting support for FV payments, housing, PBS support, rent assistance.
8	Secure housing, especially upon release, is vital for women to stay safe from FV		• Housing is critical to post-release safety – often the most important thing. • Women incarcerated (even for short stays) often lose their housing. Sometimes sentences are longer if women do not have a secure address to be released to. • Challenges with housing if women have been living with their perpetrator prior to being in prison. Sometimes women return to abusive relationships when there is nowhere else to go. • Women are often expected to find housing in a very short time period (e.g., a couple of days after being told that FV support was terminating). • Many women in prison have had unstable housing for a long time and being in prison makes it harder to break the cycle.	• Prior to release, women's basic needs for housing should be assessed and supported. • Safe, reliable release options for crisis accommodation or supported accommodation. • Rent support during and after incarceration. • Post-release housing should never replicate a prison-like institution, and that provision for housing should always feel separate from the Correctional system in order to feel safe and supportive.

Appendix G: Supplementary Table 5 – Themes, Descriptions, and Recommendations arising from the Focus Groups with Workers

Supplementary Table 4. **Themes, descriptions, and recommendations arising from focus groups with workers.**

Theme	Description	Key messages and recommendations
1 Facilitators to women's engagement in FV support or education programs in prison.	**Reputation/personalised outcomes:** • Establishing a reputable program with a long-standing presence in the prison increases engagement. Stakeholder engagement events also raise awareness and referrals. This is essential, given that programs often lack clear referral pathways, and improvements are needed to better identify women in need. • Word of mouth is a key determinant for establishing the programs reputation, which in turn increases engagement. For example, women who have had positive experiences are more likely to encourage others to attend. Further, programs that provided women with tangible outcomes (e.g., provision of safe housing, reconnection with their children, or building pre-release connections with post-release community organisations) are more likely to engage women, rather than programs providing psychoeducation or therapeutic support alone. **Group facilitators:** • Programs are better received by women when facilitated by well-trained workers who create a gentle, trusting, and non-shaming environment, with the recognition and understanding that women seeking support may not be ready to leave unsafe relationships. • Proactively reaching out to women who may face challenges attending sessions is valuable. It is crucial to demonstrate consistency, investment, and reliability to encourage women to seek support. • Ideally, FV workers should be based on-site at the prison and offer an open-door policy to enhance trust and coordination. • Anecdotally, the inclusion of male facilitators (when carefully selected) can be positive and safe for women. **Flexibility and timeliness in program offerings:** • Programs that offer interactive and well-paced sessions that accommodate trauma and diverse learning needs are more engaging. Timeliness is also important, with programs needing to be flexible and available to offer support closer to release or when safety concerns arise.	• Continued long-term investment in programs with demonstrated success in providing personalised outcomes. • Allowing flexibility in program design and delivery is likely to be important given the unique needs of women needing support and the characteristics of the prison environment. That said, staff felt that programs should be delivered in-person where possible. • Programs should encourage workers to be proactive in engaging women, honouring the fact that it takes time and consistency to build a trusting relationship within which a woman may feel comfortable enough to disclose FV and be open to support. • Investment in building the workforce of specialised, well-trained FV workers operating on-site at the prison. • Program attendance should be flexible, voluntary, and empower women to make choices and maintain agency. • Short-term and drop-in programs, along with diverse program structures and lengths are needed to cater for the wide range of needs and preferences for women in prison.
2 Barriers to women's access	**Issues with identifying and accessing support:**	• Overall, the responses emphasise the need for systemic change, including better training for

Theme	Description	Key messages and recommendations
to and engagement with FV programs in prison	• The current approach to identifying and addressing FV in prison lacks consistency, often relying on prison officers rather than trained therapists. This is problematic as the power dynamics between prison officers and women replicate FV relationships. • While all women have access to the "Programs Form", which they must complete to indicate their need for FV support, some women may choose not to disclose information out of fear, disclose it shortly before their release, or have experienced past disappointments with service engagement. • Instances where services were not followed up post-release contribute to women feeling let down. Providing forms too close to the start of their sentence, when they may be recovering from drug withdrawal or other pressing concerns, can also hinder disclosure readiness. • Significant delays in programs receiving referrals from prison staffers (e.g., up to a month after the form had been completed). These challenges can be further compounded by a lack of understanding and awareness about FV among prison officers, which hinder appropriate referrals and support. **Structural and operational barriers:** • Insufficient funding, lack of resources, overstretched staff, long waiting lists (particularly at DPFC), and short service contracts (e.g., 12-months) limit the consistency or availability in service offerings, which means that women may not always have a positive experience when seeking support. • Short sentences, large remand population, and quick turnover in the prison system make it challenging to establish trust and engage women in FV support. Limited resources and funding affect the availability of essential services such as trauma counselling, safe housing, and exit planning. • Communication gaps between prison officers, programs and services and external/community service providers result in unclear referral processes, missed appointments, double-booking and inadequate support for women. Cultural and language barriers, mental health challenges, and literacy difficulties further hinder engagement. • Furthermore, the challenges in staff rostering, with significant gaps between their presence in the prison, result in uncertainty for women who disclose sensitive information, unsure of how it will be handled. The dual role of prison officers as both recipients of disclosures and enforcers of disciplinary actions adds complexity and can erode trust. • Prison officers may be either victims or perpetrators of FV themselves, which can impact on the willingness of women to disclose FV experiences or seek support.	prison officers, improved coordination among services, and longer-term support beyond the immediate pre-release period (e.g., through consistent and integrated throughcare support). • Addressing these barriers requires a trauma-informed approach, universal screening for FV by specialist FV workers, and a more proactive and coordinated response to ensure the safety and well-being of incarcerated women affected by FV. • Staff recognised the need for a dedicated individual or system to support service coordination, ensuring a more universal, trauma-informed approach to FV identification and referrals. This could improve information sharing and holistic coordination efforts among FV programs. Although a FV Triage Form exists to connect women with specific services based on their needs, the lack of integration and coordination between services often forces women to retell their stories, causing re-traumatisation. Sharing FV assessment information in a more integrated and comprehensive manner would better serve the trauma needs of these women. • Systemic changes needed to address child protection issues, as women disclosing FV often face the risk of losing custody of their children or having children placed with the father or paternal family members, limiting contact. • Greater training for prison officers is needed due to significant variability in response from some workers in the prison e.g., some ignore disclosures of FV versus others that might be having unsafe conversations when they are not qualified / equipped to do so. • To mitigate the risk of women being identified as a victim while in prison, services should have a comprehensive understanding of the specific dynamics within the prison setting. Alternatively,

Theme	Description	Key messages and recommendations
	• Women seeking support may be concerned about being identified as a 'victim' within the prison environment, potentially making them vulnerable to other inmates. This risk is heightened when the women share a similar background or have perpetrators that may be known to other inmates (e.g., women from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities).	this could be achieved by avoiding categorising services solely as 'family violence' and instead implementing holistic support programs. This would make it less apparent to the broader prison population why a woman is participating in a particular program, reducing the potential for identification, and targeting based on vulnerability.
3 Ability to meet the FV needs of **First Nations and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse women** in prison	• Cultural considerations such as protectiveness over perpetrators and shame associated with disclosure may hinder engagement in group settings. Tailoring support programs to address these cultural dynamics is crucial. • There are notable gaps regarding service offerings for women from a Sudanese/African background. • Language barriers and concerns about interpreters from the same community as the perpetrators can further complicate effective communication. • Impacts of COVID-19 on cultural diversity in prisons, as travel restrictions resulted in fewer women from overseas countries. • Staff members who participated in the focus groups felt that First Nations women seemed to receive more adequate support, with prompt engagement, cultural consultants, and modified programs that incorporate Aboriginal art and cultural elements. • Instances of racism and cultural insensitivity by prison officers can be a significant barrier to women engaging. Overall lack of accountability or follow through after receiving universal cultural safety training.	• Providing specific programs and interpreters who understand the cultural context can help to build trust through in-person interactions, as this fosters a stronger sense of connection and safety. • The presence of First Nations therapists or co-facilitators, or having the option to have them involved, contributes to a sense of cultural safety. However, staff identified that there should be stronger pathways for First Nation's women in prison to become peer support workers /mentors/ advocates, however this is often blocked by Corrections. Findings ways for First Nations women to become leaders for their community was thought to be important for improving healing and their ability to fulfill their potential in that. • To better meet the support needs of First Nations and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse women in prison, it is essential to provide culturally appropriate services, address language barriers, ensure privacy and confidentiality, address systemic racism within the prison system, and offer on-site services. Moving forward, it is important to prioritise ongoing training and support for prison officers, ensuring accountability to the implementation of cultural safety principles and trauma-informed practices in the long term.
4 Staff experiences of **support** with responding to the	**Lack of job certainty and program continuity:** • Significant uncertainty regarding job security and program continuity which affects the ability to address the FV needs of women in prison. Lack of continued funding appears to reflect an inadequate prioritisation from a public health perspective.	• Overall, the role demands on staff addressing FV needs in women's prisons encompass the need for specialised expertise, time and resource constraints, and the challenges associated with limited funding and capacity.

Theme	Description	Key messages and recommendations
FV needs of women in prison	• The reliance on 12-month funding cycles poses a significant barrier to staff feeling supported in their work. The absence of job continuity hinders staff ability to develop practice, plan professional development opportunities, and establish strong relationships with colleagues. It becomes challenging to promote and advocate for women in the prison amidst this uncertainty. • Lack of compatibility and transparency in funding arrangements and service frameworks which creates confusion and hampers effective communication among different services within the prison. The lack of certainty also affects the women themselves, as staff cannot provide assurance regarding the availability of certain programs or services they may request. **Role demands:** • Time and capacity constraints are significant challenges, with workers feeling overstretched and under-resourced. Time pressures of conducting a thorough FV assessment which typically takes an hour or more including paperwork and referrals. • Good Shepherd serves as the primary FV service for Victorian's women's prisons but needs additional funding and resources. Good Shepherd's current funding was reported as only allowing for 1.3 equivalent full-time positions, resulting in a lack of adequate capacity for the significant level of need among incarcerated women. The current funding arrangement meant that Good Shephard staff were only able to offer three one-hour sessions per woman. These sessions may primarily focus on rapport building, with limited time left for conducting assessments or providing adequate treatment planning or support. This timeframe was described as insufficient to complete the delicate task of unpacking a woman's history and ensuring she feels safe and supported upon returning to her unit. • Comprehensive assessments should be conducted by specialised FV workers who have the necessary expertise and time to provide appropriate support. For example, staff members with the skills to perform MARAM risk assessments may be reluctant to do so due to concerns that conducting a thorough risk assessment only to refer the women elsewhere does not align with a trauma-informed approach. • Role demands on staff are multifaceted, extending beyond FV to encompass various responsibilities. Complex dynamics exist between prison staff and the women who require FV support, as staff members attempt to balance their desire to support women while also needing to maintain order within the prison setting. This is pertinent given that the disclosure of FV can lead to re-traumatisation and trigger challenging outward-facing behaviours in some	• Providing longer-term funding contracts is essential for improving staff wellbeing and service development. In turn, this is likely to also benefit women seeking support as increased and continued funding will facilitate many of the factors identified in Theme 1. • One further recommendation would be to establish and maintain a community of practice (COP) to support prison staff. This COP could bring together staff from different services to offer valuable support and collaboration opportunities. This can involve case consultations and peer supervision, enabling workers to discuss emerging trends and share their experiences. • Encouraging reflective practice sessions within and across teams can promote learning and mutual support among staff. It is essential to involve participation from different programs to facilitate insights from diverse areas of expertise. Resources should be allocated to allow for adequate capacity and dedicated spaces for practitioners to join COP. Staff felt that there would need to be careful consideration of the facilitator in order to maintain a safe and supportive space where staff can openly share their experiences. • Implementing these recommendations can provide prison staff with increased support, collaboration, and shared learning opportunities, leading to improved outcomes in addressing the needs of individuals in prison. • The need for more expertise and specialised qualifications in providing FV services to incarcerated women was emphasised. Most prison staffers lack the necessary qualifications and experience to work directly with traumatized women in this context. It is deemed essential that appropriately trained FV experts deliver these services, highlighting the importance of the

Theme	Description	Key messages and recommendations
	women. This situation becomes more complex when underqualified prison staff mishandle disclosures or fail to provide the expert support necessary. In such cases, staff members may find themselves in the conflicting position of needing to contain or manage difficult behaviours, even though these behaviours may arise as a result of re-traumatisation. **Workplace isolation:** • The layout and scheduling arrangements in prisons, such as separate buildings and different working days, contribute to limited interactions and collaboration among program workers. The lack of opportunity for meaningful conversations and connections creates a sense of isolation within the prison setting. The loneliness experienced in such an environment can affect staff longevity and lead to higher turnover rates when employees do not feel connected to their peers. • During COVID, a monthly cross-program group meeting was established where staff from various DPFC services could attend for peer supervision, advocacy work, and discussions on relevant topics like reunification or substance abuse. However, due to role demands, scheduling classes and a lack of private spaces in the prison made it hard for staff to attend.	MARAM (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management) framework reflecting this expertise requirement. • Overall, these responses underscore the need for improved job security, program continuity, transparent funding arrangements, and better opportunities for collaboration among staff working to address FV needs in prison settings. • The presence of co-workers can significantly reduce workplace isolation, highlighting the need for opportunities for program staff to debrief and connect with colleagues. • Increase frequency of cross-program meetings. Currently, meetings are held either annually or bi-annually. The current format provides little opportunity for each person to share. Establishing relationships among staff who work in the same building and on the same day could be more beneficial, although it is rarely feasible.
5 Training and support needs for staff	• Training alone is insufficient without addressing the underlying cultural issues within the prison system. Shifting the focus from punishment to rehabilitation and establishing a culture that prioritizes and respects the impact of FV is essential. Further, staff expressed a need to create a safe and supportive work environment. Many prison workers expressed feeling unsafe and unsupported at work, which hampers their engagement in any training efforts. • Specific training needs were identified to enhance staff competence in dealing with the complex issues surrounding FV. These include training in micro-counselling skills for FV conversations, working with individuals with disabilities, and meeting the unique cultural needs of First Nations and Vietnamese women. Training on gender-responsive principles and group facilitation skills, along with ongoing supervision for group facilitators, can not only improve professional development but also reduce staff isolation within the prison environment. • Many workers witness vicarious trauma and human rights violations within the prison system and express a desire to effect change.	• Address cultural barriers and safety concerns within the prison setting prior to offering training. This may increase the sense of confidence among staff which is needed before staff are able to fully benefit from training programs. • By adopting a comprehensive approach that combines training, cultural shifts, safety measures, specific skill-building, and opportunities for advocacy, the training and support needs of staff can be effectively addressed. Opportunities for advocacy should be provided. Establishing safe channels and independent entities, such as an ability to participate in an independent inquiry could allow staff to safely raise concerns without fear of repercussions. This would facilitate overall improvements for both staff and women in prison.