



# Research Publication

## Changing Conditions in a Women's Prison 1972-1984

Maureen Miner  
Angela Gorta

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## CHANGING CONDITIONS IN A WOMEN'S PRISON 1972-1984

Prepared by Maureen Miner and Angela Gorta

Department of Corrective Services,  
Research and Statistics Division

Department of  
Corrective Services  
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## **PREFACE**

In 1984, a N.S.W. Government Task Force on Women in Prison was set up to review the management of women prisoners and make recommendations especially about the construction of new prison accommodation for women. The Research and Statistics Division of the N.S.W. Department of Corrective Services carried out a substantial amount of research in support of the Task Force. Following submission of that Report in 1985, the government set up an Implementation Committee to put into effect those Task Force recommendations which have been adopted.

The research conducted for the Task Force obtained a large amount of new data on women prisoners. Time constraints limited analysis of the data and consideration of the conclusions which could be presented to the Task Force in time for the final Task Force report. Thus, the Corrective Services Commission and the Minister for Corrective Services agreed that further work should be done to produce substantial Research Publications based on further analysis of the data and consideration of relevant literature. This Research Publication is the second of a number which have been prepared in this way.

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views or policies of the Minister for Corrective Services or the New South Wales Corrective Services Commission.

Public discussion of correctional policy and practice often is based on assumption, prejudice and general attitudes. Research carried out elsewhere can too easily be ignored, dismissed as irrelevant to local conditions, or misapplied through ignorance of the sometimes substantial differences in social context and correctional systems. I am pleased to be able to present this report which sets out locally obtained data in the context of a critical examination of the results and relevance of research in other societies. The processes of discussion and evaluation of policies can continue with a better factual basis, to which this report makes a useful contribution.

**DON PORRITT**  
Chief Research Officer  
October, 1986.

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Preliminary data analysis was performed by members of the research team, with additional assistance from Joyce Athanasopoulos, Ruth Pennington and Dale Waters. The writing of the preliminary reports which provided a profile of women in NSW prisons for the Task Force on Women in Prison was undertaken by Angela Gorta, Michelle Karas and Maureen Miner. This report presents a more thorough analysis than was possible in the preliminary reports to the Task Force.

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## SUMMARY

The female prison population of N.S.W. changed during the 1970s in terms of its size and the offences, sentences and age-related characteristics of the prisoners. This study attempts to examine whether corresponding changes in prison conditions have occurred. Selected data obtained from interviews conducted with sentenced women prisoners in 1984 are compared, wherever possible, with the responses of women prisoners interviewed in 1972. The purpose of this study is to describe changes which have occurred and to evaluate changes in prison conditions for women in N.S.W. on the basis of formal principles enunciated by Nagle (1978), internationally formulated minimum standards, and the notions of equity and empowerment.

The prison conditions are discussed in five main sections: accommodation; health services; links with family and friends; programmes and relationships in prison. Corresponding to the growth in the female prison population in N.S.W., there were marked changes in the accommodation available. The increase in women's prison accommodation from one to two institutions over the period studied has allowed some separation of the different security classifications of women prisoners. However, the women interviewed in 1984 suggested further separation with distinct accommodation blocks for unsentenced prisoners, first timers, drug users and prisoners with long sentences. According to women prisoners, single cell accommodation is preferable to shared rooms or dormitory accommodation. However, despite the construction of additional single cell accommodation at Mulawa, almost half of the women interviewed at Mulawa in 1984 reported that they shared a room.

Illness and the standard of the available medical services were of great concern both to the women prisoners interviewed in 1972 and those interviewed in 1984. Three major problem areas relating to the provision of general prison medical and dental services

emerged from the 1984 interviews: access to prison medical and dental staff, assessment or treatment received, and the women's perceptions of prison doctors' attitudes. In addition, consideration needs to be given to the special medical needs of prisoners suffering from drug-related problems.

Regulations concerning communication with family and friends appear to have been liberalized following the Nagle Report, despite some difficulties due to staffing constraints and overcrowding of the visiting area. The most notable change in the area of contacts with children has been the closure of the Mothers and Babies Unit in 1981, denying prisoners who are mothers the opportunity of caring for their children during their imprisonment. Of the 1984 sample, 31% saw themselves as being directly affected by the lack of facilities for mothers and babies.

Over the period 1972-1984 there was little change in the type of work performed by women in prison. The key change to prison education appeared to be in the emphasis on remedial and vocational courses with a corresponding decline in "traditional feminine" areas. However, the women in 1984 expressed a strong desire for even more vocational education, in fields such as bar work, motor mechanics and catering. The greatest change in leisure activities over the twelve year period appeared to be an increased interest in sport and exercise.

The change from all female staffing to a combination of male and female staffing has resulted in women prisoners being concerned about privacy in the accommodation areas. Most of the women favoured the removal of male prison officers from the wings.

At the end of the report eleven specific recommendations are made for changes in prison conditions for women. These are considered essential first steps in a process of change if the principles of equity and empowerment for women prisoners are to be taken seriously.

## Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

In two previous reports on women in NSW prisons, changes in the criminal records and personal characteristics of inmates were investigated over the period 1970-1984 (Miner, 1986; Miner and Gorta, 1986). A summary of these findings will be presented below. A related issue, which is the focus of this report, remained: as the characteristics of female prisoners changed, were corresponding changes made in prison conditions?

### 1.1. Changes in the nature of the female prison population

The female prison population of NSW changed during the 1970s in terms of size, offences, sentences and age-related experiences.

There was an overall decline of 50% in annual receptions of women under sentence, from 778 in 1970-71 to 386 in 1979-80, the last year for which reception data are available. On the other hand, census figures indicated that the population of female prisoners in custody on 30th June doubled from 81 (68 of whom were sentenced) in 1971 to 166 (103 sentenced) in 1984.

The decline in receptions but increase in daily population figures suggests that fewer women were being sentenced to imprisonment, but the sentences given were longer. The proportion of women received with very short sentences of less than 3 months declined from 83% of receptions in 1970-71 to 65% in 1979-80. Similarly, receptions with sentences of 3 months or more but less than 2 years increased from 15% to 22% over the same period, while women entering gaol with determinate sentences of 2 years or more increased from 2% to 12%.

According to data from the 1970s there was a decline in the number of women received into prison sentenced for minor offences such as prostitution, vagrancy, drunkenness or unseemly words. The proportions of receptions in all other categories of offence consequently increased.

While receptions for drug offences increased from 13 women (2% of all receptions) in 1970-71 to 65 women (17% of all receptions) in 1979-80, these figures do not indicate the extent of drug usage amongst the women prior to their imprisonment. From an interview study conducted in 1984 it was found that almost two-thirds of the sentenced women in prison reported long-term, daily usage of heroin before being imprisoned.

During the 1970s there was a marked trend towards a younger female prison population. The proportion of receptions under sentence aged 35 years or more declined from 45% in 1970-71 to 18% in 1979-80. Possibly related to age trends there was a tendency for the female prisoner of

the early 1980s to have attained a higher level of schooling than her counterpart of the 1970s. She was less likely to be a mother, and if she did have children she probably had fewer children and cared for them as a single parent.

Changes in legislation, law enforcement policies and social factors which appear to have affected the composition of women prisoners have been discussed in the publication "Women in NSW Prisons - Population Trends 1970-1984" (Miner, 1986). A major event which affected prison conditions in NSW for males and females was the Royal Commission into NSW Prisons by Justice Nagle, held in 1976-78. As a result of this inquiry 252 recommendations were made for changes to the prison system. All of these changes, whether in administration, staffing, prisoner entitlements or programmes would have had some effect on prison conditions, defined as the physical and social environment of the institution.

### 1.2. Evaluation of changing conditions

How can changes in prison conditions be evaluated? At the least, conditions should reflect formal aims or governing principles established by consensus. In the case of NSW these have been enunciated by Nagle (1978) as: imprisonment should be a punishment given only as a last resort; where imprisonment must be given as a sentence the shortest possible term should be applied; the prisoner's loss of liberty should be the only punishment; and prisoners should be housed in the lowest possible security.

In addition, prison conditions should at least comply with minimum standards prescribed by an international forum such as the United Nations. The Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners and Related Recommendations was adopted in 1955, by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs at the First United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders. It covers such matters as accommodation, hygiene, clothing, bedding, food, exercise, medical services, discipline, work, education, recreation, prisoner complaints, contacts with the outside world, prisoners' property, religion, institutional personnel, procedures relating to reception, transfer, illness or death and prison inspection and aftercare. These rules were given implicit endorsement by Nagle (1978) who stated:

"It is acknowledged that these Rules are not always applicable in the prevailing circumstances but they do indicate the accepted principles of modern penological thought" (p. 272).



### 1.3. Problems specific to imprisonment of women

Further points should be noted in the evaluation of prison conditions for females. It has been argued that women prisoners are disadvantaged in comparison with males because of their smaller numbers and because of social stereotypes which severely limit the treatment of women in prison. Thus changes which enhance equity between the two sexes should be encouraged. In addition the notion of equity can refer to comparisons between women in prison and women in the community. Moreover, since women in particular have been oppressed in the past, changes should be directed towards empowerment (Hahn Rafter and Natalizia in Hatty, 1984). These matters require further consideration.

#### 1.3.1. Smaller population

During the 1970s female receptions in NSW comprised between 5% and 6.7% of total receptions. When Australian figures are considered over the same period, the daily average population of female prisoners to total prisoners varied between 2.1% and 3.3% (Mukherjee, Jacobsen and Walker, 1981). Similarly, the proportion of women to total offenders imprisoned in state and federal institutions in the United States varied from 3.5% in 1974 to 4.1% in 1980 (Mukherjee in Hatty, 1984). In most cases females are housed separately from males. This policy has several implications. Women are incarcerated in small institutions, with only one or two women's prisons in each state. The small daily numbers result in higher costs of providing programmes in prison, thus limiting the range of educational, vocational and work release programmes available to women (Haft in Datesman and Scarpitti, 1980). With only one, or perhaps two, female prisons there is little opportunity of establishing a range of institutions with varying security classifications. Hence security is set at a level deemed necessary for the 'worst cases' at the institution.

However, the smaller size can also have some advantages. With small numbers of women prisoners there is greater possibility for pioneering reforms such as work release. In the U.S. the work release scheme commenced at the Massachusetts Reformatory Prison for Women, Framingham, in 1880. Yet when the programme was established under the 1913 Huber Law in Wisconsin, females were not included (Gibson, in Crites, 1976). This illustrates the fragile nature of penal reforms and the tendency for male legislators to ignore women and their needs.

#### 1.3.2. Social stereotypes

Many stereotypes of women in general have negative effects when applied to female prisoners. Women are commonly held to be de-

pendent and in need of guidance. This results in close supervision of female offenders, with a proliferation of local prison rules and regulations to which conformity is expected. Yet many of these 'dependent females' are solely responsible for the care of children and will need to take action to discover and obtain welfare entitlements, and make arrangements for housing, education, health and recreation of the single parent family.

Another stereotype is that of the female as homemaker, resulting usually in high standards of neatness and cleanliness within the women's prison. The negative effect may be seen when housework is considered to be vocational training for women, to the neglect of industrial skills.

A similar stereotype is that of social facilitator, resulting in training courses in hair care, make-up, the role of the hostess and similar 'social graces'. Again the negative aspect of these courses is the assumption that all women in prison could benefit from them, with little consideration for the needs and preferences of individuals within the system.

#### 1.3.3. Oppression

An excellent discussion of theoretical and social issues underpinning female incarceration is given by Hatty (1984) who, from a feminist perspective, argued that past oppression should result in current policies to redress inequities suffered by women prisoners. A clear example of female oppression in western society can be seen in the area of work. It was argued that while work roles based on assumptions of biological differences may change, the distinction between superior men's work (in terms of status and technology) and inferior women's work remains in modern capitalism.

Within the criminal justice system oppression is evident in the sexualization of female crime so that the basis of prostitution, for example, is viewed as sexual rather than economic. Another source of oppression, it was asserted, is the illusion of chivalry in the treatment of women offenders. In fact, chivalry really discriminates against those who fail to exhibit the traditional female sex role. Examples included women harassed by police for blatant sexuality and juveniles processed in a discriminatory fashion for failing to adhere to middle-class standards of femininity.

Oppression in the gaols is seen to encompass two main areas. First, there is the encouragement of physical inertia through lack of exercise, poor diet and use of sedation. This may also apply to male prisoners. Secondly, oppression can be seen in the assumption of traditional female gender roles which confirm dependency (Hahn Rafter and Natalizia, cited by Hatty, 1984).

Hatty's suggestions for empowerment of women prisoners are stated briefly; they flow logically from her argument. These include: the provision of community-based corrections which could reduce the loss of liberty and excessive use of rules and regulations for some female offenders; opportunities for relevant training, recreation and participation in external programmes to restore equity and female independence; and ways of investigating inmates' grievances, a means of directly empowering incarcerated females. However, empowerment should also include a recognition of the special needs of women prisoners and their entitlement to special consideration on the basis of those needs. It is obvious that during pregnancy women have special needs for health care, diet and exercise. Pregnant women in prison should receive special consideration on the basis of these needs. Similarly, many women in prison stand in a special relationship of provider, care giver and role model for their children. Consideration should be given to providing suitable units for young children to stay with their mothers in prison and for relaxed, contact visits in friendly surroundings for older children.

#### 1.4. Aim

The purpose of this study was to evaluate prison conditions for women on the basis of formal principles enunciated by Nagle (1978), internationally formulated minimum standards, and the notions of equity and empowerment of a disadvantaged population.

## Chapter 2: METHODOLOGY

This report presents selected data obtained from interviews conducted in 1984 for the New South Wales Task Force on Women in Prison. Comparisons were made, wherever possible, with responses of women prisoners interviewed in 1972. For background information concerning conditions for females in prison during the 1970s, reference was made to the report of the Nagle Royal Commission into Prisons and to data published by the N.S.W. Department of Corrective Services such as the 1977 Directory. Details of prison conditions in 1984 were also obtained from the report of the NSW Task Force on Women in Prison (1985). Since the focus of the current report concerns the 1984 interviews, the methodology for this study is presented in some depth. It should be noted that after preliminary reports were presented to the Task Force, detailed data analyses were performed, providing the basis for a more extensive discussion.

### 2.1. Subjects

It was planned to interview all sentenced women prisoners held in custody at Mulawa Training and Detention Centre for Women and the Norma Parker Centre on 13th August, 1984. A total of 107 women comprised the population under study, with 74 located at Mulawa and 33 at the Norma Parker Centre.

Interviews were completed with 90 women (62 at Mulawa, 28 at Norma Parker), a sample of 84%. While another two women answered some of the questions, the remainder declined to be interviewed or left the gaol before the interviews could be arranged.

### 2.2. The Interview Schedule

In order to cover all topics of interest to the Task Force a lengthy interview schedule was required. Topics covered in the schedule, in order of presentation, included: accommodation; food; clothing; medical services; counselling; discipline; general conditions; drug use, prior experience of rehabilitation programmes and current treatment; alternatives to imprisonment; effects of imprisonment; mothers and children; courses; work and work release; sports and recreation; and demographic data.

### 2.3. Discussion of methodology

Two factors seriously constrained the methodology: the large number of data items required by the Task Force and the extremely limited time in which to plan, conduct and analyse the study (a total of 3 months).

It has been suggested that some of the items such as those in the alternatives and effects of imprisonment sections could have been obtained elsewhere and thus reduced the interview length. However, it is even more time consuming to mount a series of separate studies using alternative sources, time which was not available to the research team. Also, separate approaches preclude linking data to other responses obtained in the prison interviews.

For many areas, self-report was the only possible source of information. Often where other records were available such as official files, these items were also based on self-report. Distortion is a possible problem with such dependence on self-reports. Caution in revealing information which could be used against a respondent's interests, embarrassment, or a simple desire for privacy could all result in inaccurate replies. Unmotivated inaccuracies due to failure of memory or understanding can also affect responses.

Care was taken to ensure rapport and encourage recall by suitable probes. In addition, the confidentiality of replies was stressed in the intro-

duction to the interview. If respondents felt major reservations about being frank in the interviews it is believed that much of the material obtained, particularly about drug use, would not have been reported.

A further complicating factor could have been the respondent's own limited experience. In many areas their suggestions for change may have been limited by what they considered possible because they had only been exposed to a narrow range of options. This possibility must be considered when drawing conclusions or making recommendations from these findings.

With long interviews there is also the possibility of high rates of refusal or discontinuation of interviews and impoverished responses due to fatigue. In fact, only two women failed to complete an interview once it had commenced and in neither case was its length an issue. The refusal rate of 10% is not surprising considering that many women had been involved in other research projects over the previous few months and some had already been interviewed in relation to other matters of concern to the Task Force such as remand status and ethnicity. An attempt was made to avoid impoverished responses by placing those sections with the highest frequencies of open questions in the middle of the interview. There is no evidence to suggest that respondents who gave very full answers initially tended to answer peremptorily at later stages.

Almost one-third of the questions were completely open-ended. This has the advantage of avoiding researcher bias in defining the response categories and possibly capturing unexpected data but requires time-consuming content analysis of responses before coding categories can be finalized. While the open-ended questions generated more work during data analysis, they were extremely valuable as a source of detailed information.

In view of the time constraints and the volume of data required by the Task Force, the methodology adopted the most practical approach and can be accepted with confidence as a basis for making decisions.

### Chapter 3: DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS

#### 3.1. Age

Two-thirds of the women interviewed were aged between 21 and 29 years. Details are given in Table 1 below.

Age in years	Number	%
18-20	10	10.9
21-24	28	30.4
25-29	33	35.9
30-34	10	10.9
35-44	7	7.6
45 and over*	4	4.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\* Upper limit 56 years. Median age 25 years.

#### 3.2. Offence and sentence details

When the most serious offence was considered 33% had convictions for property offences, 23% for violent offences such as murder, rape or robbery and 21% had convictions for fraud.

Offence	Number	%
Murder	5	5.4
Manslaughter	3	3.2
Rape	1	1.1
Armed robbery	9	9.8
Assault and rob	2	2.2
Robbery unspecified	1	1.1
Forge, utter	8	8.7
False pretences, Fraud	11	11.9
Embezzlement	1	1.1
B.E.S.	16	17.3
Stealing	12	13.0
Receiving	1	1.1
PCA	1	1.1
Unregistered, uninsured motor vehicle	1	1.1
Import prohibited imports	2	2.2
Supply prohibited imports	3	3.2
Use or possess Heroin	4	4.3
Supply Indian Hemp	1	1.1
Supply Serapax	1	1.1
Breach of recognizance	2	2.2
Breach of parole	2	2.2
Breach of CSO	2	2.2
Possess unlicensed pistol	1	1.1
Trespass	1	1.1
Found with intent to commit an offence.	1	1.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Just under one-quarter of the women interviewed were serving short sentences of less than 12 months. Almost half (45%) were serving between 1 year and 5 years while another 26% were facing long terms of 5 years and over.

Length of Sentence	Number	%
Less than 1 month	4	4.4
1 month and less than 6 months	12	13.0
6 months and less than 12 months	6	6.5
1 year and less than 2 years	24	26.1
2 years and less than 5 years	17	18.5
5 years and over	24	26.1
Life	5	5.4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Time in gaol was defined as the period from the date of reception on the current episode, whether as a sentenced or unsentenced prisoner, to the date interviews commenced (13.8.84). If a period on remand was interrupted by time on bail the reception date resulting in the last continuous period of imprisonment was used to calculate time in gaol. Since time in gaol includes any time spent as an unsentenced prisoner, it cannot necessarily be used to indicate the proportion of the sentence served at the time of the interview. Two-thirds of the women (64%) had spent between 28 and 364 days in gaol while 19% had spent 12 months or more in custody. Only 8% had spent less than a fortnight in gaol on the current matter(s).

Prior imprisonments were defined as periods spent under sentence and terminated by release to probation (under the Probation and Parole Act (1983)), parole, licence, remission, sentence served or by partial payment of a fine. Most of the women interviewed (84%) had experienced at least one prior imprisonment. Half had been in prison once before, 22% twice before and 10% had served between three and eight prison sentences in the past.

### 3.3. Place of Birth

Only 16% of the women interviewed had been born overseas. Apart from two women who had lived in Australia for less than 2 weeks before their arrest on the current matter, the remainder had

lived in Australia for at least three years. In fact, two-thirds of those born overseas had resided here for at least 15 years.

Most of the respondents (85%) had spoken English since early childhood. Seven of the women born overseas and seven Australian-born prisoners reported speaking a language other than English at home when they were young. However, only one prisoner, a Turkish woman who had lived in Australia for 17 years, required an interpreter for the interview.

### 3.4. Education and Employment

Only 13% of respondents had completed years 11 or 12 of senior secondary education while just under one-third (30%) had completed year 10. The majority of respondents (52%) had left school after completing between one and three years of secondary education.

One-third of the respondents had finished a course after leaving school. Most commonly a technical college course such as typing had been completed.

Table 4: Courses completed since leaving school

Type of course completed	Number	%
Technical college or trade	29	65.9
Other certificate	5	11.4
Degree or diploma	4	9.1
Interest or hobby course	2	4.5
Other*	3	6.8
Not stated	1	2.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\* Includes nurses' entrance, receptionist course and nursing sister's certificates.  
NOTE: 30 women had completed courses but some of these women had completed more than one course.

Over three-quarters of the women interviewed (78%) were unemployed at the time of their arrest. Those who were employed largely reported working in cooking, secretarial, entertainment and nursing fields. A wide variety of jobs was reported as the usual occupation of 69 prisoners, with another 14 women claiming to have no usual occupation and 7 normally engaged in home duties. Occupations cited most frequently were secretarial (typist, clerk, word processor - 14%), sales assistant (10%), factory worker (machinist or unspecified - 8%), bar attendant (7%) and

nurse (7%). A further 7% reported prostitution, drug dealing and shop lifting as their usual "work".

In order to obtain a measure of the extent of unemployment experienced by women prisoners, respondents were asked how many years they could have been working since they left school and how many years they actually worked. Periods of potential employment ranged from 2 to 34 years with an average of 10.3 years. Actual employment averaged 5.6 years (range 0 to 28 years). For each respondent, total unemployment as a proportion of total working life was calculated. Only seven women had been employed for all of their working lives, 17% had spent up to one quarter of their working lives unemployed, 30% had spent up to half their working lives unemployed while 44% of respondents had been unemployed more frequently than they had been employed.

### 3.5. Marital Status

The women prisoners were asked their marital status before entering gaol and their current marital status. Where two responses were possible, such as divorced and de facto, the interviewer was instructed to record the most recent status.

Only 10% of respondents claimed that they were married before entering gaol. The majority were either never married (41%) or living in de facto relationships (32%). Imprisonment appeared to have had only marginal effects on the marital status of the women. Seven women indicated that de facto relationships had terminated as a result of their sentence while two formerly married women reported that their current marital status was either divorced or separated. On the other hand, two women claimed to have entered de facto relationships with a girlfriend since entering prison.

### 3.6. Housing

Prior to their current imprisonment over half the women were living in either a rented flat (33%) or a rented house (26%). One woman in five lived in a mortgaged or fully owned house and very few (8%) lived in Housing Commission accommodation. The remainder (13%) lived in less permanent accommodation such as rented rooms, garages, motels, caravans or with friends and relatives.

Just over one-third of the women reported that they expected to return to the same accommodation after release. Almost half (44%) stated that they definitely could not return to their former dwelling while another 11% felt that it was possible to return but they preferred to find something else.

### 3.7. Source of finances

The 90 women interviewed reported a total of 123 sources of income. Those who reported more than one source generally supplemented a social service benefit by earnings from part-time work or by engaging in illegal or fringe activities. A little under half the income sources (45%) were social service benefits while in 20% of cases an illegal or fringe activity such as prostitution, drug dealing or stealing was given as a major income source. Only 18 women (15%) claimed to have derived their income from full-time work. (See Table 5 for details.)

Table 5: Sources of income prior to imprisonment

Sources of income	Number	%
<i>(multiple responses)</i>		
Earnings from full-time work	18	14.6
Earnings from part-time work	7	5.7
Unemployment benefits	26	21.2
Sickness benefits	14	11.4
Deserted wife or single parent	12	9.8
Other pension	3	2.4
Supported by spouse, defacto, parents	11	8.9
Illegal or fringe activities	25	20.3
Other	6	4.9
Not stated	1	0.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## Chapter 4: ACCOMMODATION

Given that women are to be imprisoned, two main questions arise concerning the physical structure of the imprisonment. Firstly, should all of the women prisoners be located in the one institution or should they be dispersed around the State? Secondly, within an institution should the accommodation be established in single cells, dormitories, multi-occupancy rooms or some combination of these?

One argument for housing the women in one, or a few institutions, concerns the provision of programmes and facilities. Because there are so few women in prison compared with men, the cost of providing equal or comparable programmes is considered prohibitively high. Weisheit (1985) has found that in the U.S.A. even among prisons for women, there is a positive association between the size of the average daily population and the number of programmes offered. Hence fur-

ther dividing this already small group may further limit the programmes and facilities available to them. Alternatively for reasons of classification it can be argued that the women should be subdivided. Amongst the United Nations' Standard Minimum Rules it is advised that:

"The different categories of prisoners shall be kept in separate institutions or parts of institutions taking account of their sex, age, criminal record, the legal reason for their detention and the necessities of their treatment." (p. 3).

If women of different security classifications are housed together the security is set at a level deemed necessary for the "worst cases", hence individuals classified on paper as lower security risks are treated as if they were in fact higher security risks.

With regard to the question of single cells versus dormitory accommodation the United Nations' Standard Minimum Rules advise that while either single cell or dormitory style accommodation is acceptable, depending upon the design of the institution, it is not desirable to have two prisoners in a cell:

"(1) Where sleeping accommodation is in individual cells or rooms, each prisoner shall occupy by night a cell or room by himself. If for special reasons, such as temporary overcrowding, it becomes necessary for the central prison administration to make an exception to this rule, it is not desirable to have two prisoners in a cell or room.

(2) Where dormitories are used, they shall be occupied by prisoners carefully selected as being suitable to associate with one another in those conditions. There shall be regular supervision by night, in keeping with the nature of the institution." (p. 3).

In addition, individual cells have obvious benefits including privacy, reduction of harassment between prisoners, providing personal territory and an area which can be personalised to an individual's taste.

#### 4.1. Comparison of accommodation in 1972 and 1984

The accommodation available for women prisoners in N.S.W. changed markedly between the 1972 and 1984 studies. Between the two studies a second centre was opened and new single cell accommodation replaced much of the largely dormitory and multi-occupancy room style accommodation available at the original institution.

At the time of the 1972 study the variable security Mulawa Training and Detention Centre was the only institution routinely to hold female prisoners. Mulawa had only been in use for a little over two years, with the first prisoners transferred there from the State Reformatory for Women at Long Bay in March 1970. The accommodation was largely a combination of dormitory style and multi-occupancy rooms. There was provision for only a small number of single rooms out of a total possible occupancy of 93 to be accommodated. There were three main accommodation areas: Caroline Chisholm House primarily for first offenders and unsentenced prisoners with maximum capacity for 52 women; Margaret Catchpole House accommodating up to 31 recidivist inmates; and Mary Reiby House comprising ten single cells for inmates who needed to be separated from other women for security reasons (Dewdney and Miner, 1975).

In the 1972 study women were not asked for comments specifically pertaining to the accommodation offered at Mulawa. However, there was a general evaluation of the centre which involved the women being asked what they liked best at Mulawa, what they liked least, and ways in which Mulawa compared favourably or unfavourably with State Reformatory for Women at Long Bay.

Although the majority of the 100 women interviewed did not specify aspects of the accommodation when nominating either what they liked best or what they liked least about Mulawa, five women specifically mentioned being able to mix in the dormitories as a positive aspect of Mulawa while four women mentioned the dormitories where they were unable to go to their room for peace and quiet as the feature they liked least. Of the thirty-three women who had experienced both Mulawa and the State Reformatory for Women at Long Bay, twelve stated they preferred the dormitory accommodation at Mulawa; not being locked up alone and being able to mix more. In contrast, ten stated that they preferred the single cells at the State Reformatory to the dormitories at Mulawa.

The Nagle Report raised two main issues concerning accommodation of women in prisons. Firstly, since all women were housed in the one institution "there has never been any real classification of women prisoners... There is no excuse for not attempting to classify women prisoners. Arrangements should be made for classification of women prisoners - a procedure the Commission regards as vital. Accommodation should be made available to coincide with the classification" (p. 211). Secondly, the accommodation at Mulawa largely consists of dormitories and "the main complaint about this accommodation is the lack of privacy" (p. 311).

With regard to these issues the Nagle Royal Commission in 1978 recommended that:

"Women prisoners should be separated in accordance with their designated classification" (Recommendation 191)

and

"Individual cellular accommodation should be provided for the inmates of Mulawa in lieu of the dormitories" (Recommendation 192).

Women interviewed in the 1984 study were accommodated in two institutions: Mulawa Training and Detention Centre and the minimum security Norma Parker Centre. In the time between the two studies a new cell block comprising sixty single cells had been built at Mulawa. This is known as the Anne Conlon wing and was first occupied in September 1980. The Norma Parker Centre for low security women prisoners was officially opened in July 1980. At Norma Parker, there are three separate accommodation areas: Winmill Cottage, Morgan House, and a section located above the offices, for women on Work Release. Since Norma Parker is not a reception gaol, there is no separate accommodation area for unsentenced prisoners. The women at Norma Parker are accommodated in single or shared rooms. There is no dormitory accommodation there.

The number of inmates living in each of the accommodation areas, along with a brief description of each area is shown in Table 6.

At Mulawa over half the women (56%) reported having a room of their own, while almost one-third (29%) said they shared a room with another person. One-quarter of sentenced women are housed in dormitories.

When asked whether lack of privacy was a problem for them, almost two-thirds of all respondents (60%) indicated that it was not; 23% felt it was somewhat of a problem and 17% considered lack of privacy to be a big problem. Lack of privacy was primarily a problem for those housed in the dormitories of Catchpole at Mulawa.

Prisoners reported various ways of dealing with the lack of privacy. Most commonly the women felt there was nothing they could do but accept the situation (27%). Others said that they could escape the problem by spending time alone, hiding or not allowing themselves to be disturbed (19%). Some women tried to block out the problem by not thinking or worrying about it (14%), or making themselves busy with other activities e.g. watching T.V., reading (14%). A few women (11%) claimed that they had become habituated to the problem or learned to cope with it. The remainder (19%) had devised some rather clever ways of confronting the situation, for example:

"(I) calculate when interruptions will occur and structure (my) activities accordingly";

"(I) put blankets over windows after bed check".

#### 4.2. Suggestions for changes to the accommodation in 1984

The provision of single accommodation was the most frequently suggested change (30%). In contrast 15% of women suggested that inmates should be housed two to a room. A greater number of, or extra, facilities (e.g. desks, cupboards, powerpoints, showers) were also called for (21%). The need for larger areas within the gaol was given almost equal emphasis with the need

Table 6: Number of sentenced prisoners housed within each of the accommodation areas, 1984.

Area	Number of Inmates
<b>Mulawa (n = 64)</b>	
Anne Conlon Wing ( <i>opened 1980, single cell accommodation ensuite bathrooms</i> )	32
Catchpole ( <i>older style dormitory primarily accommodating remand prisoners</i> )	13
Blaxland House ( <i>cottage for minimum security prisoners</i> )	11
Annex ( <i>hospital</i> )	4
Rose Scott ( <i>psychiatric section</i> )	2
Mary Reiby ( <i>segregated area for prisoners on protection</i> )	2
<b>Norma Parker (n = 28)</b>	
Winmill Cottage ( <i>2 storey, old building formerly used as a children's institution; non-institutional furniture</i> )	17
Morgan House ( <i>similar to Winmill Cottage</i> )	8
Work Release section ( <i>similar to Winmill Cottage</i> )	3

for more facilities (20%). Apart from the gaol as a whole, the areas in which more space was advocated were in the remand section and inmates' rooms.

A group of prisoners (12%) believed separate accommodation for different types of inmates would be a desirable feature of a new gaol. The types of inmates for whom separation was seen as being beneficial were: women serving their first gaol sentence; junkies; and unsentenced prisoners. The separation of minimum and maximum security was also suggested.

Other suggested changes to accommodation included the provision of a separate shower/toilet for each inmate (12%) and the construction of separate houses (7%), instead of a large accommodation block.

Accommodation issues were of prime concern for the N.S.W. Task Force on Women in Prison. One focus of the Task Force was whether or not a new women's prison was necessary or desirable.

Yet this issue proved difficult to resolve. In the Report of the N.S.W. Task Force on Women in Prison it was noted:

"Perhaps the most controversial issue discussed during the deliberations of the Task Force concerned the provision of institutional accommodation for women prisoners. However, despite the differing opinions which developed during the debate on this point, all members of the Task Force were in agreement that the present nature of the accommodation at Mulawa Women's Prison was entirely inadequate for the number of women contained therein." (p. 274).

The main report of the Task Force recommended:

"The immediate redevelopment of the Mulawa site, consistent with a reduced prison population, in a manner which takes into account the needs of women prisoners and staff in the institution and in keeping with the management principles laid down by the Task Force." (Recommendation 282, p. 37).

However, a Minority Report (1985) was also issued which recommended:

"That the Mulawa site is totally unsuitable for redevelopment or use for long-term prisoner use" (Recommendation 6, p. 4).

The Minority Report continued to recommend three separate centres with a number of specialist facilities:

"A small maximum security facility

for women prisoners who are persistently violent and/or escapees or whose status is sufficient to constitute a grave threat to the wider community and/or the State. It is emphasized that although a maximum security facility, located away from core facility, it is not be designed for punishment.

A larger, core medium security facility not on the Silverwater site.

Accommodation should be unit style, with participatory management along normal domestic lines i.e. akin to a townhouse.

Minimum security womens prison: this would be located in another suburb, well away from the medium facility." (pp. 27-28).

### 4.3. Discussion

The changes in women's prison accommodation from one to two institutions over the period studied has allowed some separation of the different classifications of women prisoners, with only minimum security prisoners held at the Norma Parker Centre. However, at the time of 1984 study the majority of women prisoners including women of all security classifications were being held in Mulawa Training and Detention Centre for Women. In answering questions about improvements they would like to see if a new women's prison were to be designed, women in 1984 suggested separate accommodation blocks for unsentenced prisoners, first timers, drug users and prisoners with long sentences. Given these comments, together with the recommendations of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules, the Nagle Royal Commission and the Minority Report of the Women in Prison Task Force, it would seem that more should be done to separate women of different classifications. However, it would seem beneficial if women's prisons were centred in Sydney. Data presented elsewhere (Miner, 1986) indicated that about three-quarters of the women had lived in Sydney prior to their incarceration. Dispersing women to gaols in other parts of N.S.W. could adversely affect their social and family ties. The issue of the provision of programmes to women, and the argument for housing women together will be discussed later in this report.

Concerning the question of single versus shared rooms, almost half the women interviewed at Mulawa in 1984 reported that they shared a room, but single cells were preferred by the majority. These preferences, together with official recommendations reviewed previously, indicate that single accommodation should be



provided for at least a majority, if not all, women prisoners.

## Chapter 5: HEALTH SERVICES

Although little information is available from the 1972 study on this topic, prohibiting detailed comparison of satisfaction with health services between the two time periods, it is clear that illness and the standard of the available medical services were of great concern both to women prisoners interviewed in 1972 and those interviewed in 1984. The inadequate provision of health care services for women in prison was discussed at length both in the report of the Nagle Royal Commission and in the Report of the N.S.W. Task Force on Women in Prison. The Nagle report states:

"It became obvious, as the Commission hearings progressed, that the medical services for women at Mulawa were inadequate...This inadequacy was highlighted in a number of respects: lack of routine ante-natal care and gynaecological services, lack of treatment for psychiatrically disturbed prisoners, lack of routine medical care and the extensive over-use of tranquillizers." (p. 310).

Also mentioned were complaints about the attitudes of nursing staff and the need for a thorough medical examination of women prisoners on reception at Mulawa.

The very first of the recommendations specific to the topic of women prisoners made in the Nagle Report was that:

"Medical services at Mulawa require immediate improvement to remedy the deficiencies noted in this Report" (Recommendation 187).

The Medical and Dental components of Health Services are considered separately below.

### 5.1. Medical Services

The three main issues to be discussed are: the provision of general medical services; the provision of specialist detoxification and treatment facilities for drug users; and the question of choice of doctor.

#### 5.1.1. General Medical Services

At the time of the 1972 study, Mulawa Training and Detention Centre had a small hospital with medical staff available 24 hours a day. The medical facilities available are described below:

"The clinic within the Detention Centre comprises two observation cells for disturbed prisoners, three clinic cells for infectious cases and five general beds. In July, 1972, three of

these general beds were occupied by mothers with their babies (women are permitted to care for babies up to the age of 12 months while serving their sentence). Usually two nurses are on duty at the clinic during the day, with one nurse on duty at night and at weekends. One additional staff member is on duty when visiting medical staff (doctor, gynaecologist, dentist) attend the centre on Mondays and Thursdays." (Dewdney & Miner, 1975, p. 24).

In 1972, "only half of the women in the study reported that their health was good. The remainder specified a range of conditions resulting in poor health; psychological complaints such as 'nervous tension' and 'depression' were most common (reported by 14% of total sample). Nine women attributed their poor health to poor food and inadequate care provided at Mulawa in their opinion." (Dewdney & Miner, 1975, p. 47). Unlike their 1984 counterparts, over one-third of those with a medical problem had no clear idea of the nature of their condition (see Table 7).

**Table 7: Nature of complaint: diagnosis made by medical personnel as reported by women prisoners in 1972.**

Nature of Complaints	No. of respondents
Not applicable - not attending hospital	42
No clear idea of condition	22
Nerves, tension, depression	16
"Bad heart", hypertension	4
Urinary infection	3
Other miscellaneous ( <i>diabetes, kidney problems, ulcer, rheumatism, cold, pregnant</i> )	13
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

(Source: Dewdney & Miner, 1975, p. 48)

Following its enquiry the Nagle Royal Commission made a number of recommendations pertaining to the provision of medical services. These included that:

"Adequate medical advice and treatment should be made available to all prisoners" (Recommendation 135);

"The Health Commission should continue to provide the staff of the Prison Medical Service" (Recommendation 136);

"Practitioners employed part-time as medical officers in the gaols should serve for no longer than five years" (Recommendation 139);

"Selected prison officers should undergo elementary medical training to assist prison medical staff in their duties" (Recommendation 140);

"In all cases the appropriate test for the provision of medical and other health care should be whether it is necessary for the health of the prisoner. Prisoners should receive the same medical and health care as a private citizen. The cost of such a provision is no answer to its necessity" (Recommendation 144);

"A Proper medical examination and assessment should be conducted of each prisoner on reception" (Recommendation 145);

"There should be an overall assessment of the Prison Medical Service by an outside medical expert" (Recommendation 149).

With specific regard to women prisoners it was recommended that:

"Ante-natal and gynaecological treatment should be available to all women prisoners" (Recommendation 189)

and

"The current practice of over-sedating women prisoners should cease" (Recommendation 190).

The report of the Women in Prison Task Force documented the health services available to women prisoners as follows:

"Up until October 1984, medical care for women prisoners was restricted to treatment by only one doctor and one dentist, both male and both

full-time employees of the Prison Medical Service. The small number of women at Norma Parker means that resources are even more limited. The doctor visits the prison only one day a week, and prisoners needing dental treatment must be taken to Mulawa.

The nature and organization of existing health-care resources at Mulawa put major constraints on attempts to deliver a full range of high quality health services to women prisoners. Mulawa contains two separate units for the provision of health services: the Annex, a generalist unit; and Rose Scott, a psychiatric unit. Constraints in providing effective health care are compounded by the use of both the Annex and Rose Scott as "dual function" units. The Annex is used for detoxification and pregnancy care as well as generalist medical care and Rose Scott for punishment, protection and "OBS" apart from its intended function as a therapeutic psychiatric community. The "dual functions" seem doomed to failure because of inherently contradictory needs and roles.

Preventive care services do not exist and it is possible to suggest that the health of prisoners is likely to deteriorate through bad diet, lack of exercise and high stress levels". (pp. 175-6).

Three-quarters of all women interviewed in 1984 reported having received medical treatment for health problems during their current prison episode. Twenty-two of these 68 women had been treated for more than one problem. Table 8 shows the number and percentage of inmates reporting each type of problem.

Table 8: Health problems after imprisonment requiring medical attention, 1984

Type of problem	Number of Women	% of all women * (no. = 91)
Minor infections/wounds/ aches/etc.	30	33%
Gynaecological	15	16%
Nervous tension/anxiety/ depression	11	12%
Drug-related	11	12%
Circulatory/respiratory	7	7%
Major chronic	6	7%
General surgery	3	3%
Cancer	2	2%
Other (e.g. traction)	4	4%
No problems	23	25%

\* Percentages in the table do not sum to one hundred, since some women reported experiencing more than one health problem.

Limited access to doctors was experienced by inmates at both women's prisons. However, the delays experienced at Norma Parker were longer than those at Mulawa. Immediate medical attention was available for emergency cases at both prisons. Typically Norma Parker inmates (75%) said that they waited between four and seven days to see the doctor who was scheduled to visit weekly. At Mulawa over half the women (53%) reported having seen the doctor, whose visits were scheduled for Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, within four days of their request. Thus a sizeable proportion of women at both institutions appear to have experienced delays in obtaining medical treatment longer than those common in the community. This measure was reinforced by spontaneous comments about delays when referring to problems experienced with prison medical treatment (13%). Greater access to prison medical and dental staff was also a frequently suggested change (24%) for improving the state of medical services. In light of the reported delays experienced and spontaneous comments offered, it appears that increased access to medical treatment would be both a necessary and desired improvement to current prison medical services.

Medical treatment received in gaol was also criticized. Prison doctors' assessment and treatment were considered to be inferior to that performed by outside practitioners. There were four areas in which prison doctors' treatment was seen to differ from that of outside doctors: assessment, belief in reality of symptoms, provision of treatment and doctors' attitudes.

Prison doctors' assessment was considered to be less thorough (24%) in that examinations were quick and cursory. It was also alleged that the doctor was actually incompetent at assessing the patient's problem. The following comments were made by some of the inmates professing these views:

"If you had a serious disease, he (the doctor) would say it was something simple";

"Went several times to one doctor but he never examined me";

"If you don't tell him (what is wrong) he doesn't know".

Some inmates felt that prison doctors did not believe they were sick (22%) because they were just complaining, they were hypochondriacs, or because they wanted drugs. Typical comments made by these women included:

"(The doctors) make you feel like a hypochondriac";

"Doctors (are) always suspicious that you come for drugs".

It was also alleged by 38% of respondents that prison doctors failed to prescribe the correct treatment. This practice, it was reported, consisted of giving any medication, the wrong medication or no medication, or simply giving Panadol for every problem. For example, some women claimed:

"(I was) given anti-histamines for insomnia and (I) sneezed for one week";

"(The doctors) give any old medication";

"(The doctors) think two panadol fixes everything";

"(The doctors) given aspirin when you're sick (there are) no antibiotics".

The final area of difference was perceived to be the prison doctors' overall attitude. One-third of inmates who had received treatment described the doctors to be rude, uncaring, uninterested or unwilling to make any effort. Prison doctors were also accused of looking down on prisoners and treating them in an inhuman way (18%). Specific criticisms concerning prison doctors' attitudes included:

"(The doctors are) very dismissive of you as a person";

"(The doctors) treat you as less than human";

"(The doctors) treat you roughly, (they) physically push and shove";

"(The doctor is a) butcher; (he) should be considerate with female prisoners."

When asked directly whether they had experienced any problems in gaol with medical treatment, more than half the respondents (59%) indicated that in fact they had. When discussing specific problems experienced with prison medical services, various women complained of ineffective, inappropriate or insufficient treatment, or refusals or difficulty in obtaining medication. These problems, together with the number of women who reported having experienced each problem, are presented in Table 9.

From Table 9 it is evident that a number of women had trouble with obtaining medication. Some of these women commented:

"(The) gynaecologist wouldn't give (the) pill to regulate (my) period";

"(The doctor) wouldn't let (me) change tablets which were giving (me) side-effects";

"(Was) not being allowed own medication, (was) not given alternative. (There was a) lapse in treatment";

"(I) had to fight to get medication".

**Table 9: Problems experienced in gaol with medical treatment**

Problem	Number of Women	As a percentage all women No. = 91
Doctor wouldn't give or change medication/trouble getting medication	18	20%
Ineffective, inappropriate or insufficient treatment or medication	16	18%
Delay in diagnosis, treatment or tests	12	13%
Doctors not interested/have bad attitude	8	9%
Couldn't get treatment	8	9%
Accused of complaining/doctors wouldn't believe inmate was sick	7	8%
Inadequate/awful facilities	3	3%
Lack of care	3	3%
Doctors thought inmate was after drugs	3	3%
Other ( <i>miscellaneous</i> )	12	13%
Not stated	1	1%
No problem or treatment experienced	37	41%

*N.B. Percentages in the table sum to more than one hundred because some women reported experiencing more than one problem.*

Many other complaints centred on problems with the treatment prisoners had or, supposedly, had not received. Delays in treatment and diagnoses were also mentioned. Specifically, prisoners claimed:

"No results, (I had) stomach pains, (they) didn't know what it was, (they) didn't try to find out";

"(I got the) wrong treatment, unqualified doctors".

"All girls get sick as a result of not enough medication. One girl gets sick and spreads germs to others. (The) medication is insufficient and incorrect";

"Had to wait four months to go to hospital".

Once again, the prison doctors' perceived uncaring attitude was an issue. Typical comments about this attitude were:

"No communication or interest";

"They (the doctors) don't care - give (you) a panadol, (want you to) go away".

Some prisoners stated that they had been accused of complaining, or that the doctors had not believed that they were sick. Some of the comments describing their experiences were:

"Had headaches - they said she was acting";

"(They) generally ignore complaints until (you are) just about dying".

A minority of women claimed to have experienced a situation which could best be termed a "lack of care". This situation arose when alleged failure to provide adequate care arrangements resulted in certain complications. One woman's story shows the seriousness of this situation:

"Went to Westmead (for surgery to cervix). Still sick at Westmead, history of haemorrhaging but still sent back to Rose Scott. Repeatedly complained of post-operation bad pain at Rose Scott even though couldn't walk. Haemorrhaged at Rose Scott, staff panicked, no ambulance, sent to outside hospital almost unconscious - five weeks in hospital and six blood transfusions".

#### **5.1.2. Detoxification facilities and drug treatment programmes**

Although the need for detoxification facilities and drug treatment programmes was not mentioned in the 1972 study, when discussing the medical needs of prisoners generally the Nagle Report recommended that:

"Screening procedures should be established to identify drug users, both on admission and during the term of imprisonment" (Recommendation 146).

and

"Detoxification treatment should be provided for drug addicts and a continuing treatment programme should be established for them" (Recommendation 147).

As was noted earlier in the report, in recent years, there has been an increase in the number of women convicted of drug offences and an increase in the number of women using drugs, particularly heroin, prior to imprisonment. The women interviewed in 1984 were asked a detailed series of questions concerning their prior drug usage, experiences in gaol, suggestions for programmes to be run in gaol and programmes to be run in the community. This material is presented in greater detail elsewhere (Miner and Gorta, 1986).

At the time of the 1984 study the detoxification procedures available for women prisoners were as follows. On arrival at Mulawa, female prisoners were interviewed by a nursing sister who decided whether admission to the eight bed hospital annexe was required for detoxification. The two criteria for admission were the woman's report of addiction or presence of physical withdrawal symptoms. Two showers were available for the use of women in the annexe. Other women who were ill or pregnant could also be accommodated in the annexe. While undergoing withdrawal from heroin, an individual can often experience cramps, vomiting, dehydration and agitation. These symptoms may be relieved by a hemineurins programme, megavitamins and warm baths. Prisoners withdrawing from barbiturates require hospital observation and anti-convulsant treatment.

Of the 59 women who reported regular heroin usage, 55 had encountered gaol detoxification procedures and only one considered that these procedures were satisfactory. Over half (53%) suggested that the detoxification procedures could be improved by employing more and better medication and not simply relying on hemineurins, for example:

"By medication especially - definitely not enough and what is given is no good. What is given (hemineurins) cannot be taken by some girls, and there are no alternatives".

Some (17%) said that facilities such as showers and baths should be improved. It was suggested by some inmates (12%) that counsell-

ing could be helpful. Others discussed staffing, suggesting that prisoners should be able to see a doctor rather than a nurse on admission. Some proposed that more caring people who have been trained in detoxification procedures were needed (9%).

Only three women (5%) stated that they were receiving treatment for their drug abuse at the time of the interview. They claimed to be taking hemineurins (for withdrawal), unspecified medication and methadone plus counselling. Most of the heroin users stated that they were not being given any treatment (70%) or did not require any (24%). Two women stated they were taking multi-vitamin tablets.

When asked whether they could suggest any treatment which would be helpful in gaol, over one-quarter of the prisoners said that there were no treatment programmes which would be helpful. This was either because they thought that nothing would work in the gaol setting (17%) or because no programme could work unless they had made up their mind to stop (12%). The most frequently suggested treatment was a methadone programme (21%) or methadone combined with counselling (8%). Others suggested counselling and group sessions (14%) or that it should be like some specific programme in the community (6%). Those who suggested the programme in gaol be like specific programmes in the community differed in the programmes they mentioned. A range of other suggestions were made by single individuals (12%) including:

"(there should be) compulsory films showing the damage it does to you, show you really bad pictures of people who have overdosed to shock you out of it, have lectures etc";

"something that makes you sleep through it";

"have rehab. on a farm with work, courses and counselling".

Approximately one in ten of the women (11%) said that they did not know what sort of programme could help while they were in gaol. One woman pinpointed some of the problems of running treatment programmes in gaol when she said:

"Any programme would be hard to run because most prisoners want to take drugs inside (gaol) to have a "day out" i.e. to escape mentally".

### 5.1.3. Choice of doctor

Before coming to prison slightly fewer than half the women (45%) reported suffering from health problems which required regular medical attention. In dealing with any health problem in the community the majority of the women (81%) saw

their own doctor. Only a minority went to any general practitioner who was able to see them (9%) or to a hospital outpatient section (6%).

When given the opportunity to express their preference for a doctor of a particular sex, over half (52%) the respondents indicated that this characteristic was unimportant. However, almost an equal number of respondents stated that they would like to see a female doctor (43%), while only a small minority (5%) preferred a male doctor.

## 5.2. Dental Services

Information on use and level of satisfaction with prison dental services was not collected in the 1972 study. In the Directory of Corrective Services, 1977 it is recorded that:

"Twice a week a government dental officer visits the centre (Mulawa Training and Detention Centre) to provide dental care. A regional dental senior employed by the Health Commission may be called in to provide emergency dental treatment" (p. 100).

In the 1984 study, the women prisoners expressed problems with dental treatment, gaining access to the dentist and, to a lesser extent, with the dentist's attitude. Slightly more than half of the women interviewed in 1984 (53%) had seen the dentist during their current prison episode. One-quarter had experienced dental problems, but hadn't seen a dentist.

Amongst the 48 inmates who had seen the dentist, only one-third believed that dentists inside prison treated inmates in the same way as dentists in the community. There were a number of ways in which prison dentists' treatment was seen as varying from that of outside dentists: 41% considered the quality of the prison dentist's treatment to be "poorer"; 25% said he was too ready to pull teeth out; and 22% felt he didn't give anaesthetic when it was needed.

When asked directly if they had experienced any problems in gaol with dental treatment, slightly more than one-third of inmates reported that they had. This proportion constitutes almost two-thirds of women (65%) who had required dental attention during their current imprisonment. Once again, quality of dental treatment emerged as the principle issue. Approximately half the women (52%) who had experienced problems reported insufficient, ineffective or short-term treatment. Examples of their comments included:

"(The dentist) gave a temporary filling instead of a permanent one. It fell out, then he pulled (the) tooth out";

"(The dentist) pulled out (my) tooth instead of (giving me) a crown";

"Had tooth out, (it) took one hour to pull, (he) broke it up, (there are) still pieces coming out".

Some women (15%) stated that they were unable to obtain any dental treatment. Others (27%) had difficulty seeing the dentist either in the form of delays and hassles, or in his simply not being available when they had a toothache. The dentist's equipment and uncaring attitude were also criticised (12% and 9%, respectively).

## 5.3. Suggestions for changes to medical and dental services

When asked whether they would change anything to do with prison doctors, nurses or dentists, the 90 respondents were able to produce a total of 197 distinct suggestions. The two most frequently suggested changes involved the provision of better doctors (42%) and dentists (36%). Specific improvements in the quality of doctors concerned increased competence (13 respondents) and compassion and caring (6 respondents). The following comments relate to suggested improvements to prison doctors and dentists:

"More selective, find out (doctor's) opinion about inmates - whether they are in the job for money or whether they care";

"(Get doctors) who know how to give (the) right treatment";

"(Get) better dentists (who are) not so quick to pull teeth out";

"(Get dentists who) speak to you as a normal person".

"Doctors should take time, listen";

"(Doctors) shouldn't restrict use of medication just because there are many drug offenders inside".

A group of inmates advocated the option of choice in the provision of medical services. They suggested that prisoners should be able to choose a doctor from outside which could include any doctor (15%) or one's own doctor (6%). Other ways in which choice could be effected was by obtaining a second opinion (8%) or choosing from several prison doctors (7%). Greater access to medical and dental staff was also mentioned quite frequently (24%). In this case, greater access meant more frequent visits by the doctors and dentists as well as making it easier for inmates to see them.

## 5.4. Discussion

Three major problem areas relating to the provision of general medical services for women prisoners emerged from the present study.

These problems were: access to prison medical staff, assessment or treatment received and the women's perception of prison doctors' attitudes. However, it must be emphasized that comments made in this section are based only on the reports of the women. Thus they reflect the perceptions of the users of prison medical services rather than an impartial investigation of all aspects of the services.

One cannot validly assess the quality or suitability of prison medical services purely on the basis of prisoners' reports. For example some of the complaints reported are quite explicable as misunderstanding of proper treatment. The suitability of the treatment may not be understood by some prisoners. Such misunderstandings however are not confined to prison populations. Most studies of medical services find a substantial number of patients do not understand the treatment and complain of poor doctor-patient communication.

Prison is stressful and may aggravate health problems or focus attention on otherwise unnoticed problems. However, regardless of any such attention factor, health problems require adequate medical attention. In some cases a prison doctor may not wish to prescribe any medication, for example where it is suggested that the prisoner is obtaining illegal drugs which could react with prescribed medication.

A number of possible changes could improve the existing state of prison medical services at least from the user's point of view. These changes, together with the problems they address, are presented below.

#### **5.4.1. Changes to provision of general medical services**

The need for greater access to prison doctors has already been discussed. Ideally, access would be increased by making more doctors available rather than one doctor being available at more times.

Special consideration should also be given to the type of medical treatment needed by certain subgroups of prisoners. In particular there would be prisoners who reported suffering from drug-related problems. Their needs would include observation and possibly medication during detoxification and withdrawal, treatment of any infection or illness and special programmes to alleviate any nutritional deficiencies developed during prolonged drug-use.

Some clarification is also warranted of the criticisms of prison medical treatment, reports of lack of care and alleged reluctance and refusal by doctors to prescribe medication. In order to do so, an independent review would be advisable. Such a review could establish the adequacy of facilities and treatments available as well as more

precisely determine the circumstances surrounding prisoners' complaints. Periodic independent investigations such as these could help ensure that prisoners were receiving proper medical attention and protect doctors from unfounded criticisms. Prisoners may be seeking solace for problems due to their imprisonment by presenting apparently medical complaints. Some attempt to test this explanation and to offer more appropriate services could be made. An independent audit might be able to suggest viable alternatives.

#### **5.4.2. Provision of detoxification facilities and drug treatment programmes**

##### **i) Detoxification**

Although most of the regular heroin users had experienced good detoxification, they strongly criticized the procedures. It is strongly recommended that separate detoxification facilities be provided for women undergoing drug withdrawal. This unit should contain adequate bathing facilities and be staffed by a nurse with experience in detoxification units outside a prison setting.

Medical supervision is especially important for the barbiturate users who may suffer severe reactions during withdrawals. Medication supplied to the women during detoxification should be similar in range, frequency and dosages to medication available in community detoxification facilities: women prisoners should not be given reason to feel that they are being punished by undergoing unassisted withdrawal because they have been imprisoned.

##### **ii) Treatment**

Three-quarters of the women stated that some kind of treatment programme should be run in prison. What kinds of treatment should be offered in gaol? A methadone programme was advocated by one-third of the women prisoners, 10% of prison officers and psychologists at both of the prisons for women (unpublished report by Godfrey and Morison, 1984). Research into community-based methadone programmes indicates that it is a safe treatment which retains its clients and can effectively reduce criminality. However, no report has been found in the literature on the operation of a methadone programme for women prisoners in order to build up a blockade dose prior to release. Therapeutic communities have achieved promising results both inside (Platt, Perry & Metzger, 1980) and outside prison (Bale, Van Stone, Kuldau, Engelsing, Elashoff & Zarccone, 1980), but length of programme participation appears crucial.

A more detailed discussion of issues related to possible drug treatment programmes to be run in gaol is presented in Miner and Gorta (1986).

#### 5.4.3. Choice of doctor

A greater choice of doctors would also be seen as a positive move by prisoners. The desirability of being able to choose one's doctor was evident in a number of the suggestions offered by prisoners. The suggested options, in order of preference, were choosing a doctor from outside (includes the inmate's own doctor), obtaining a second opinion and choosing from several prison doctors.

Allowing women some degree of choice in obtaining medical services could have a number of distinct advantages. Firstly, it would provide inmates with a situation more closely approaching that available in the community. Secondly, it would allow them to select the type of doctor they preferred. This selection could be in terms of sex (43% preferred a female doctor), perceived attitude, or whatever characteristics individual women deemed important. Thirdly, greater choice would enable women to obtain a second opinion if they questioned the diagnosis or treatment of any individual doctor.

#### 5.4.4. Changes to dental services

Since there was a large degree of overlap between reported problems of prison dental and medical services, many of the suggested changes would be the same.

Some independent review of the current state of dental services and treatment being given would help settle a number of reported complaints. The problems reported by the women could also be alleviated by offering inmates a choice of dentists.

Greater access to prison dentists is required. It would also be desirable if a dentist were to visit Norma Parker, rather than continuing to have inmates travel to Mulawa to obtain dental treatment. However, given the high capital costs of establishing a dentist's surgery it may be more feasible to arrange more frequent trips to Mulawa.

## Chapter 6: LINKS WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Imprisonment is an enforced separation from prior relationships for the period of the sentence. This poses a dilemma because after the expiry of that sentence the offender is expected to 'readjust' to society. That is, they are to become enmeshed in relationships that result in socially approved behaviour but avoid relationships that would be conducive to deviant behaviour. Provisions for prison visiting, letters and telephone calls are designed to maintain relationships approved by prison authorities by excluding known criminals. A further concern reflected in prison regulations in this area is the attempt to

maintain the prison as an isolated system, uncontaminated by drugs (apart from limited tobacco and prescribed medication) and implements that could be used for escape.

In other words, because most sentences are finite, prison administrators acknowledge the desirability of supporting 'good' relationships to be taken up on release, but all contact with the outside world brings risk of contraband. Thus policies reflect the categorization of relationships as 'good' or 'bad' and restrictions purported to minimize trafficking.

Many of the arguments relating to visits and communication with the 'outside world' revolve around the issue of whether such contacts are a right or a privilege. If they are a right then contacts should be facilitated by prison administration and not withdrawn for disciplinary reasons, but if they are a privilege they may be subject to regulation and withdrawal. Using Nagle's (1978) principle that loss of liberty is the only punishment to be enforced by imprisonment, the loss of pre-existing relationships must be viewed, not as the aim of the sentence, but rather as an unfortunate consequence which must be mitigated as far as possible. Thus prisoners have a right to visits and other contacts, limited only by their overall containment within a designated prison. Of course, with programmes such as work release, the containment may occur for only a portion of the day. Thus, release for day or week-end leave in order to re-establish relationships is still consistent with a policy of limited containment.

As well as being a right, visits and contacts at a distance are also ways of mitigating the harshness of social isolation within the prison. The maintenance of close relationships through visits or telephone calls may facilitate change or reform of lifestyle upon release, although rehabilitation should not be a consideration when formulating policy on visits. While rehabilitation or humane containment may occur through a liberal visiting policy the major consideration should be the right of the prisoner to the least interference with prior relationships.

The issue of links with families and friends will be discussed in two sections:

- general visits and communication;
- contacts with children of imprisoned women.

#### 6.1. General visits and communication

In 1972 prisoners were allowed to receive a restricted number of letters and visits. Letters were censored and the length of visits was regulated.

Details relating to these issues in 1972 were not available but the 1977 Directory of Corrective Services noted that the policy concerning visits,



letters and telephone calls was as follows (p. 102):

**Letters:** No restrictions are placed on the number inmates may send. Letters are censored by the reception officer; a detailed check is made only of letters sent by women suspected of misusing the mailing privilege.

**Phone calls:** Inmates are permitted to make phone calls from the centre. The phone is located in the reception room.

**Visits:** Unconvicted prisoners are allowed two visits per week. First offenders may receive four half-hourly visits per month and other prisoners may receive two half-hourly visits per month. Special or extended visits may be allowed if visitors have travelled long distances. Visits are held in the grounds or, in inclement weather, in the solarium and are supervised usually. Inmates are not searched unless suspected of receiving contraband."

No specific questions were asked about visits in the 1972 interview study of women in NSW prisons. However, of all suggestions made for improving the centre 9% related to visits and communication. The 1972 interview study did probe the effects of the woman's current imprisonment on her immediate family, with surprising results. It was reported, in 25% of cases, that the woman's family did not know of her imprisonment. There was severe dislocation of the family in 7% of cases, involving poverty and health problems. Emotional strain was reported by 34% of the women. Another 27% reported no effects on their families. Thus the majority of replies indicated a concern for the effect of the woman's imprisonment on her family resulting in concealment of the truth or appreciation of the stress and dislocation it caused.

The 1978 Nagle Royal Commission made few recommendations pertaining specifically to women in this area, although it was stated that "mothers should be permitted to have longer visits from infant children" (p. 312).

In his report of 1978 Nagle made the following recommendations applying to male and female prisoners:

**Letters:** "The reading or censorship of prisoners' mail should be made an offence under the Prison Regulations" (Recommendation 108);

"Prison authorities should retain the right to inspect incoming mail for contraband" (Recommendation 109);

"All prisoners should be entitled to send and to receive as many letters as they wish" (Recommendation 110);

"Correspondence between pris-

oners and their legal advisers and Members of Parliament should, in all cases, be privileged and private" (Recommendation 111).

**Telephones:** "The Prisons Commission should provide pay telephones in all institutions for the use of prisoners" (Recommendation 112);

"Telephone calls should be monitored only on security grounds" (Recommendation 113);

**Visits:** "The Regulations relating to visits to prisoners should be re-examined" (Recommendation 98);

"Contact visits should be permitted for prisoners in all institutions" (Recommendation 99);

"Visiting hours and the length of visits should be expanded" (Recommendation 100);

"Monitoring of conversations between prisoners and visitors should cease" (Recommendation 101);

"The surroundings in which visits are conducted and the facilities provided for visitors should be made as pleasant as possible" (Recommendation 102);

"No visitor should be excluded or visit cancelled except where there is reasonable evidence that the visitor poses a threat to security or a prisoner declines to accept the visit" (Recommendation 103).

According to the NSW Task Force on Women in Prison, restricted visits, letters and phone calls were still policy at Mulawa in 1984. Sentenced prisoners were allowed one visit every seven days for up to 2 hours, and a fortnightly all day visit between prisoners and their children was permitted on a week-day between 8.30 am and 3.30 pm. Visiting hours and duration were subject to the Superintendent's discretion and could be terminated due to lack of staff or overcrowding of the visiting area. Contact visits were allowed except where the prisoner had been found guilty of receiving or using drugs in prison. Inter-gaol visits were allowed every three months.

Depending on location and status as a sentenced or unsentenced prisoner, women were allowed to make between one and three phone calls per week to approved numbers subject to random monitoring.

All incoming mail was opened for checking and outgoing mail was checked randomly.

Interviews conducted in 1984 did not specifically probe attitudes to visits and outside com-

munication. However, the women were asked about the effects of imprisonment in general, and in particular the effects of imprisonment on contact with family and friends.

More than one-third of the women said that the greatest effect of their imprisonment was separation from their family (21%) or children (10%). Other commonly mentioned effects included loss of freedom, including loss of freedom of choice (13%), feeling confused and frustrated (7%) or feeling bitter and hostile (6%).

The vast majority of prisoners (93%) said that their family and friends continued to keep in touch with them while they were in gaol. In four out of the five cases where prisoners said that friends and family did not keep in touch, this lack of contact was at the prisoner's request.

## 6.2. Contacts with Children

In 1972 mothers who gave birth while in custody were allowed to care for their children in a section of the prison hospital until the child was 12 months old. The hospital itself comprised two observation cells for disturbed prisoners, three clinic cells for infections cases and five general beds which could be used by mothers.

The Nagle Report commented upon the rigidity with which the rule prohibiting infants over the age of 12 months to remain in prison had been enforced and advocated greater discretion in individual cases, such as when release would occur a few months later (Recommendation 193).

In 1979 a Mothers & Babies Unit was established in a wing of the new hospital and children other than those born in prison were admitted. Over the next year up to nine mothers cared for their children, aged 0- 32 months, at any time. In 1980 the unit was moved to Blaxland House, a cottage within the prison but close to the Parramatta River. At the end of 1981 the unit was closed. For a full discussion of the history of the unit and its theoretical basis see Hatty (1984).

From the 1984 interview study it was found that 41 women (46%) reported having children. The mothers predominantly had one child (59%) or from two to four children (37%). Only 5% of mothers had more than four children. The ages of these 82 children are given in Table 10 below:

**Table 10: Ages of children of women prisoners 1984**

Age	Number	%
0-1 yrs.	1	1.2
1-2 yrs.	3	3.7
2-4 yrs.	16	19.5
5-12 yrs.	31	37.8
13-15 yrs.	12	14.6
15 yrs. + over	19	23.2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>100.0</b>

It is interesting to compare changes in child care arrangements as a result of the mother's imprisonment. Data were available for 1972 and 1984.

**Table 11: Usual care of children, 1972 and 1984 mothers**

Care	1972 - % of 59 mothers	1984 - % of 41 mothers
By Prisoner + husband	29	2
By Prisoner + de facto	10	7
By mother as single parent	14	46
By others ( <i>includes relatives, fostering</i> )	24	37
Children grown up	22	5
Not known	2	3

**Table 12: Care of children during mother's imprisonment**

	1972 - % of 47* mothers	1984 - % of 40* mothers
By mother's parents	19.1	37.5
By other relatives	21.3	15.0
By husband or de facto	19.1	22.5
By friends	6.4	5.0
Institution/Fostered	8.5	10.0
Multiple agencies ( <i>relatives, foster parents, institutions</i> ).	21.3	7.5
Other	2.1	2.5
Not known	2.1	-

\* Excludes mothers whose children had all grown up

From Table 11 it can be seen that prior to the mothers' imprisonment care of children in the nuclear family situation was most common in 1972 followed by family members, friends or fostering. Apparently related to the older ages of mothers, 22% had grown up children in 1972. By 1984 almost half the mothers had been caring for their children as single parents.

Following the mother's imprisonment, children were most likely to be cared for by relatives (other than their grandparents) or split between a number of differing carers according to 1972 data. Mothers in the 1984 sample most frequently reported that their children were currently being nurtured by their grandparents or father. From a comparison with Table 11 it appears that many of these fathers had not taken major responsibility for their children's care prior to the mother's imprisonment. Half of the 1984 mothers stated that their children's care arrangements had been affected by their imprisonment, largely by finding a new carer (26% of changes) or by YACS instituting wardship or fostering (13%). Over two-thirds of incarcerated mothers were happy about their children's current care arrangements (71%) and 22% stated that they were not happy. Major reasons given by the latter group were that they were unaware of arrangements made for their children or that they were unable to see their children. Mothers who were contented with care arrangements largely commented that they were pleased that parents or in-laws were caring for the children.

Difficulty in keeping up a good relationship with their children were attributed to a number of reasons by the 1984 mothers. The infrequency and brevity of visits were mentioned most often (25%) and some inmates saw visits as being upsetting to themselves or their children (13%).

### 6.3. Facilities for mothers and children

Of the 1984 sample, 31% of the mothers saw themselves as being directly affected by the lack of facilities for mothers and babies and 72% of all women prisoners agreed that young children of mothers in prison should stay in gaol with them. This reaction was similar amongst mothers and childless inmates.

Those supporting mother-child accommodation in prison argued that it was the best way to maintain the relationship or to establish bonding (40%). Some said it would be desirable if a different section of the gaol or proper facilities were available (25%) while others maintained that separation was bad for the children.

Arguments for not allowing children to stay with their mothers in prison were associated with disadvantages for the child. Almost two-thirds of the women with this view considered prison to be a

bad environment in that it was a violent, abnormal and restrictive place.

### 6.4. Discussion

It appears that regulations concerning letters, phone calls and visits were liberalized over the period 1972-84, with most significant changes occurring after the 1978 Nagle Commission Report. However, in 1984 women prisoners were still limited in the number and length of visits with the possibility of monitoring of their phone calls and letters. Moreover, according to the 1984 Women in Prison Task Force, many of the apparent gains were negated by inadequate staffing and facilities. With staff shortages, visitors experience delays before reaching the visiting area and lack of supervision results in early termination of visits. The small visiting area contributes to overcrowding and lack of privacy.

It is not surprising that the report of the 1984 Task Force strongly recommended extending leave provisions for women prisoners, abolishing all restrictions on the length and frequency of visits and the building of a larger visiting facility to be open from 9 am to 7 pm.

It is unclear whether 25% of the women interviewed in 1972 failed to tell their families of their imprisonment because of feelings of shame or because of poor communication resulting from prison conditions at the time. The fact that no women in 1984 reported such concealment points to openness and, possibly, to supportive relationships that should be encouraged.

The most notable change in the area of contacts with children has been the closure of the Mothers and Babies Unit in 1981, thus denying prisoners who are mothers the opportunity of caring for their children during their imprisonment. From interview data it was found that mothers in 1984 were younger than their 1972 counterparts, had fewer children and were more likely to have cared for their children as single parents. Those mothers whose relatives were caring for their children during their imprisonment were largely happy with this arrangement but, on the other hand, three-quarters of all women stated that a Mothers and Babies Unit would be desirable.

The situation of mothers sentenced to imprisonment has been described as a double punishment in which there is loss of freedom and loss of parental rights (Haley, in Datesman and Scarpitti, 1980). Although there is no consensus over the exact nature of parental rights Haley cites the following (p. 342): "right to possession, right to visit the child, right to determine education, right to determine religious upbringing, right to discipline the child, right to choose medical treatment, right concerning the child's name, right to consent to marriage, right to services, right to

determine nationality and domicile, and right to appoint guardians and consent to adoption."

The rights of children to a safe, stable, caring relationship must also be considered. Hatty (1984) reviewed the literature on attachment in which negative effects of maternal-infant separation were discussed. It is clear that close and consistent relationships are essential for the healthy development of the child.

A concern for both the rights of the mother and of the child led to the establishment of the Mothers & Babies Unit at Mulawa in 1979. Problems encountered in the operation of the unit have been documented by Hounslow, Stephenson, Stewart and Crancher (1982) who argued that, with improved organisation, the unit should be re-established.

This report showed that the first problem was that accommodation in Blaxland House was limited to a maximum of six mothers. However, from our 1984 study it was clear that 17 mothers had a total of 20 children under the age of 5 years. Hounslow et al. (1982) recommended the re-opening of the Blaxland House Unit with the long-term goal of establishing a larger Mothers and Babies Unit in better surroundings.

Staff opposition to the unit was another problem raised by these researchers. They discussed three grounds for opposition by custodial staff: that children within a prison would be endangered as they could be taken hostage by inmates; that the prison environment is unsuitable for children and that mothers serving a sentence with their children in prison would unfairly mitigate the severity of the punishment. In contrast, Hounslow et al. (1982) argued, the presence of children would be a positive disincentive to violence by mothers or other women. While development of children within a confined space may not be ideal, the quality of relationships within the physical space are most important.

Certainly it would be essential to provide experiences outside the prison environment for children as they develop and to structure the Mothers and Babies Unit to provide all essential physical and psychological requirements. The argument that mothers would receive a "soft" prison sentence ignores the additional hardships that mothers usually experience during imprisonment: namely, separation from their children and loss of parental rights. The establishment of a unit for children within the prison would only serve to ameliorate some of these additional burdens, while demanding that the mother in prison take full responsibility for the care of her child in a difficult communal situation.

The recommendation for the re-establishment of the Mothers and Babies Unit was supported by

Hatty (1984) and the NSW Task Force on Women in Prison (1985) although the latter stressed that non-custodial measures should be a priority for mothers and young children. There is no doubt that such a unit is essential to safeguard the rights of mothers serving sentences or periods of remand in prison, as well as the rights of their children. However this report cannot address detailed considerations such as size and location of the unit, physical aspects, staffing and ages of eligible children since these matters were not fully canvassed in the interviews conducted for the Task Force.

The needs of older children must also be addressed. Inadequate visiting arrangements constitute the major source of difficulty for mothers in prison with older children. This includes restricted numbers of visits, restrictions of length, lack of privacy, lack of toys or play equipment for children, lack of refreshments for visitors and visiting hours that fail to consider school timetables.

However, the problem of providing access for mothers whose children are under formal or informal foster care is also acute. In our 1984 study 22% of women volunteered that they did not know about care arrangements for their children or had not seen their children since their imprisonment. While a number of related issues were not addressed in the 1984 interview study other writers have commented on the need for parents in prison to be involved in fostering decisions, to be informed of legal matters concerning the child and to be informed of requirements for regaining custody on release. In addition, practical issues such as the need to extend funding to providers of informal care, to give more assistance with the travelling costs of visiting and to co-ordinate contact between foster parents, mother and child have been mentioned (Hounslow et al, 1982; NSW Task Force for Women in Prison, 1985). If mothers are to resume care for their children after release, it is important for those needs to be met. According to U.S. figures, 70% of incarcerated mothers intend to resume caring for their children after release from prison (Hunter, 1984).

All of these problems require practical solutions so that the rights of parents and children may be upheld and serious consideration of the recommendations emerging from these reports is advocated.

## Chapter 7: PROGRAMMES

What is the place of programmes - work, education and recreational activities - in a women's prison? Initially work was seen as part of the punishment of imprisonment, as the term 'hard labour' suggests. However, for women in NSW this was interpreted in terms of heavy domestic work: in 1896 women prisoners were employed in laundry work, the general service of the prison and lighter duties such as needlework and picking oakum (Annual Report of the Comptroller General of Prisons, 1896).

According to the Directory of Corrective Services 1977, penal philosophy changed during the period 1900-1925 towards:

"a combination of retribution and deterrence, with reformatory treatment provided by religious influence, training in self-control, good example and encouragement for industry and good behaviour" (p. 8).

Annual Reports of 1914-18 note that women prisoners were employed in spinning wool and knitting socks for the Red Cross. In market gardens outside the State Reformatory the women prisoners raised vegetables and poultry farming commenced. Little change in philosophy or conditions for women in prison appeared to occur from 1925-50. However, from 1950 to 1975 the concept of rehabilitation was emphasized.

"Rehabilitation connoted intensive training, individually tailored through the classification process and comprising education, trade training, leisure use and group activities and followed by an after care programme" (Directory, 1977, p. 8)

Under this philosophy the aim of prison programmes was to effect reform of the offender. Work for female prisoners largely centred upon domestic duties rather than trade training, but extensive educational and leisure classes were introduced. From Annual Reports of this period it appears that a part-time handicrafts teacher was appointed in 1964 and in 1965 a course in social graces was introduced, comprising deportment, dress sense, speech, household management, hair care, skin care and etiquette.

The principles applied to programmes by the NSW Task Force on Women in Prison (1985) related, not to reform, but to individual rights, individual development and equal opportunity. It was asserted that:

"Women in prison do not lose their rights to education while imprisoned, but rather have the same rights to education as does any citizen of New South Wales.

The Task Force is aware that the

loss of liberty and the nature of incarceration place structural constraints on the right to education set out above. However, the Task Force concluded that the educational, training and activities programmes for women in prison in NSW are afforded unduly low priority, status and support within the correctional system" (p. 215).

The Task Force proposed that opportunities for individual development through education, skills training and use of leisure should be provided (p. 231). While arguing that principles of equal opportunities should be applied to prison programmes, the Task Force also advocated special programmes to encourage participation in traditionally 'male' areas and 'confidence in the marketplace' (p. 232).

As these principles are applied in the three areas of work, education and leisure, different issues are raised. Therefore each area will be considered separately. Changes will be evaluated according to the implications of a reform philosophy as espoused in the 1970s together with the concepts of equal opportunity and individual rights of the 1980s.

### 7.1. Work

In 1972 women were employed in tasks required for the general running of the prison such as cleaning, laundering and food distribution as well as in an industrial sewing workshop. Two women were employed as computer card-punch machine operators.

All sentenced women were required to work, while unsentenced prisoners could choose to work. The basic payment for prison work was 75 cents per week, with extra loadings for skill or responsibility. Part of the earnings was available for spending on approved items while the remainder was credited to the woman's account for her release.

No specific questions were asked about work in the 1972 study and in general the issue of work was rarely raised spontaneously by inmates. Out of 154 suggestions for change to the prison, fewer than four related to jobs: here it was proposed that more jobs should be made available for more 'girls', as the female prisoners were then designated.

According to the Directory of Corrective Services 1977, two industries were operated at Mulawa: garment making employing up to six women and offset printing/duplicating employing one woman. It was noted that approximately thirty women were employed at the Parramatta Linen Service, while up to six inmates performed domestic laundering at Mulawa as required.

While one woman was released from Mulawa to work every day in the community during the mid 1970s, women's official participation in these programmes lagged behind male prisoners. The Work Release Scheme began in July 1969 and home release (in which the prisoner lived at home but worked at a laundry complex in Parramatta run by Corrective Services) began in March 1976. The first official woman participant in home release commenced work in November 1976 while the official beginning of work release for women was in March 1977.

The Nagle Report deplored the lack of gainful employment for male prisoners, with only 53% of all sentenced prisoners employed in gaol in 1975-76. However it was noted that "only seven per cent of female prisoners are engaged in any form of industrial activity" (1978 p. 233). Labour intensive industries requiring little capital outlay were advocated such as hairdressing and industrial sewing for women prisoners (p. 234).

Issues explored in the 1984 interview study included: jobs held by prisoners and attitudes to prison work; suggestions for changes to prison employment; expectations and suggestions concerning jobs on release; work release for female prisoners.

#### 7.1.1. Prison jobs

Of the ninety women who answered questions about their work in prison in 1984, seventy-eight (87%) had prison jobs, two were on work release and ten (11%) had no job.

Women gave the following reasons for their unemployment:

Reasons	Number of women
Haven't been in long enough	4
Don't want to work	2
Sick	1
On protection	1
Sacked	1
Not allowed preferred job	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>

The woman who reported that she was not allowed her preferred job declined kitchen work since it was a seven day per week job, declined work in the needleroom because she couldn't sew, but was refused her preference of work in the garden because she was an escapee. The majority of the unemployed women (8 out of 10) stated that they would like to have a job during their imprisonment.

The kinds of work performed by inmates, excluding those on work release, can be seen in Table 14.

Work Performed (any or all of duties reported by women)	No. of prisoners	%
<b>Industries</b>		
Needlework production (sewing hospital gowns, prison clothing, flags; packing; sorting; etc.)	16	18
Cutting clothes into rags for industry.	4	5
<b>Other</b>		
Kitchen work (food preparation; cleaning kitchen and dining room; setting tables; washing up)	15	17
Ground maintenance (gardening; lawnmowing; garbage removal).	12	14
Wing sweeper (vacuum; polish floors; clean windows; sort rations; cleaning bathrooms)	10	11
Other sweeper (vacuum; dust; sweep; clean bathrooms and offices; odd jobs)	9	10
Laundry work (washing towels; linen; clothes; drying; ironing; folding).	6	7
Other (library and general maintenance at Mulawa, clerical work at Parramatta stores, cleaning pool at Norma Parker).	6	7
Unemployed	10	11
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>100</b>

Most of the women who were employed worked at food preparation, cleaning, laundry work and maintenance for the prison (74%). Only 20 women (26% of those employed) reported that they worked in the industries of needlework or rag production.

The majority of workers (83%) said that they liked their work. A wide variety of reasons was given, including the observation that it made time go faster, it was easy work, it was outside work

and it was interesting. The twelve women who disliked their work perceived it as boring, compulsory and in a range of other negative terms (see Table 15).

Just over half the workers (54%) reported that they had asked for their prison job. Another 41% said that the reception committee or an officer (Principal Industries Officer, Wing Officer, Reception Officer, Superintendent or unspecified) had allocated their job. Two women said that they had arranged their job through friends.

**Table 15: Reasons for liking or disliking prison work (multiple responses from 78 women employed in prison)**

A. Likes job because	No. of Prisoners	%
Keeps me occupied, time goes fast	20	21
Easy work, doesn't take long	12	13
It's outside work	11	12
It's interesting	11	12
Means I move around, get exercise	8	8
Good pay	7	7
Pleasant company, can talk with screws	4	4
Worthwhile work	3	3
Means I'm on my own sometimes	3	3
Other	12	13
Not stated	4	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>100</b>

**B. Dislikes job because**

Boring	7	44
Compulsory	2	12
Other (menial, just for money indoors, can't move around, too much drama, bonus limit too low).	7	44
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>

**7.1.2 Changes to prison employment**

Just under a quarter of the women were satisfied with the existing arrangements for prison work. Most commonly, suggestions for changing prisoner employment related to increased incentives (21%), a greater variety of work (17%) and more jobs (15%). However, many other suggestions were also made (see Table 16).

Typical comments about the major issues included:

"Prices go up but not buy-ups. Now the weekly buy-ups is \$12. Those earnings \$7 per week (minimum rate for unskilled work in laundry, gardening or as wing sweeper) need private cash and money from visitors. We should get at least \$12.";

"More jobs - there are so many people working in the garden they're bumping into each other";

"Rotate jobs periodically so girls could get turn at other jobs";

"Have two shifts in the kitchen because you have to work long hours on weekends".

Suggestions for other kinds of prison work included establishing a farm on a small scale, starting a printing shop, making coffee tables and room decorations and using prisoners to assist with some of the gaol's typing and clerical needs.

**Table 16: Suggestions for changing prisoner employment (multiple responses by 90 women)**

Suggestion	Number of Women	%
More money, incentives and higher buy-up limit	31	21
More variety of work	25	17
More jobs	22	15
More constructive, meaningful work	10	7
Better equipment	6	4
More work leading to qualifications	5	3
More choice between working and not working	3	2
More choice in obtaining jobs	3	2
More job rotation, more shifts in kitchen	3	2
Other*	8	5
Present set up O.K.	19	13
Don't care, no comment	12	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>100</b>

\* Includes: More women on work release jobs, later start in needleroom, easier jobs with shorter hours, replace Principal Industries Officer, more jobs outside the wing.

### 7.1.3. Jobs on release

Three-quarters of the women intended to look for a job after leaving prison. About 12% expected to be involved in home duties while 3% of the 90 respondents hoped to pursue full-time studies. The remainder were either uninterested in working, too ill to work, expected to attend a drug rehabilitation centre, or did not expect to work for another reason.

Almost one-quarter of the women who indicated their willingness to work after release stated that they would work at anything or had no firm preference. Most popular choices for employment after imprisonment comprised: secretarial work (16%), bar attendant (11%), factory work (7%), cooking (5%) and nursing (5%). However, some women hoped to engage in less typically female occupations such as motor mechanics, car detailing and surfboard production (see Table 17).

**Table 17: Job preferred on release from prison (preferences of 68 women who wanted to work after release)**

Type of job	Number of Women	%
Secretarial ( <i>typing, clerical, receptionist</i> )	12	16
Anything	9	12
Barmaid	8	11
Factory - unspecified or machinist	5	7
Cooking - kitchen hand chef	4	5
Nursing, dental nursing	4	5
Gardening, horticulture	3	4
Handcrafts, screen printing, jewellery design	3	4
Child care	2	3
Shop assistant	2	3
Motor mechanic	2	3
Driving	2	3
Other*	12	16
Not specified	6	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>100</b>

*\*Includes newspaper work (unspecified), hair-dressing, work on cattle station, acting, technical college teacher, prostitution, drycleaning, surfboard production, car detailing, travel consultant and unspecified work dealing with people on an airline.*

Exactly half of the women stated that they would like to train or retrain for a different job from

the one they were doing before their imprisonment. However, suggested courses covered a wide range from technical courses in secretarial studies, computer operation, hairdressing, blacksmithing, and motor mechanics to general courses in acting, welfare or animal care. Three women requested job experience in their chosen field because they had already done a theoretical course or because the skills were largely obtained on the job.

Apart from vocational courses, suggested by 26 women, a number of other ways in which the prison system could help prisoners to retrain were pointed out. Providing more work release opportunities (18% of responses), vocational guidance (7%) and allowing more phone calls (4%) were seen as practical means of helping women train for work on release. Seven of those who advocated more vocational training requested a greater use of release to technical college. Others requested additional courses, more teachers for popular courses such as typing and more text books in the library.

All of the women were asked what they thought the prison system could do to help them obtain jobs on release. Almost one-quarter of those who made suggestions (45% of respondents) reiterated the need for work release and vocational training but 15% requested more direct assistance in finding jobs. For example, they suggested that the position of Employment Officer should be established within the gaol. This person would be responsible for compiling lists of employers willing to hire ex-prisoners and providing better liaison with CES and TAFE.

Typical comments comprised:

"Have Employment Officer, escort prisoners to the CES and make sure we get local papers";

"Liaise more closely with CES and TAFE. Have them make regular visits to girls getting out for help with training or jobs";

"Find me a job. That's the only way to get one (because I) have a criminal record".

### 7.1.4. Work release

At the time of the interviews two women were on the work release programme while another woman who had applied was trying to get a job under the scheme. Questions about the work release programme which is run from the Norma Parker Centre were directed only to the two women on the scheme at the time of the study.

The two women on work release had clerical and car detailing jobs. They both thought that people on work release should be housed separately from other inmates, as one stated:



"It's a totally different state of mind and living environment (compared with) the hassles of inside".

One of the women on work release complained about the length of the selection process (reportedly 3 months) and the "endless paperwork". Job interviews were another source of difficulty. Comments were made about the problems of organizing an officer and car to get to a job interview and fears of rejection by the employer. A permanent Employment Officer with time to make the necessary arrangements and talk over the issues with the women was recommended. Work, pay and public transport to work were mentioned as boring, insufficient and time consuming respectively but the overall evaluation of the scheme was positive:

"It has its effects, the emotional double life (changing from being a prisoner to work and back again every day), but I'd rather have it than not".

A number of changes to the present scheme were suggested, including a faster selection process, more work release staff and placing more women on the scheme. However, one woman advocated its replacement with a new scheme where all the women selected for work release were first released from prison on the condition that they commute to an approved work location each day from home.

## 7.2. Education

### 7.2.1. Courses studied in prison

According to the 1972 study 46% of the women surveyed were currently enrolled in a course. No distinction was made between 'vocational' classes that could lead to a qualification and 'recreational' classes having no award. Thirteen different subjects were reported, with each of the 46 respondents enrolled, on average, in three different courses.

A slightly higher proportion of sentenced prisoners in the 1984 study (57%) reported that they were enrolled in at least one course at the time of the interview. On average, those women taking courses were enrolled in 2.7 courses each. The majority of these enrolments related to classes run within the gaol (87%) while 11% related to correspondence courses. One woman at the Norma Parker Centre studied externally at a local technical college.

Comparisons between the two periods in types of courses studied can be seen clearly in Table 18 below. Whereas in 1972 almost half the courses related to traditional feminine pursuits such as cooking, sewing and hair care, these accounted for only 12% of enrolments in 1984. Reported enrolments in educational and voca-

tional courses increased from 11% in 1972 to 33% in 1984. Emphasis on arts and crafts almost doubled in 1984 (39% of enrolments) over 1972 (22%). These results indicate a change from narrow feminine activities towards both vocational and diversified craft activities.

**Table 18: Courses reportedly taken by women in prison, 1972 and 1984**

Course	1972		1984	
	No.	% of enrolments	No.	% of enrolments
<b>Basic education</b>				
Remedial & basic literacy *			12	
Higher School Certificate *			4	
Other ( <i>School Certificate Tech transition</i> ) *		*	2	13.0
<b>Vocational</b>				
Typing	15		13	
Clerical skills	-		6	
Other ( <i>showcard &amp; ticket writing, bookkeeping, accounting, dental assistant</i> )		11.1	8	19.6
<b>'Traditional feminine'</b>				
Cooking & cake decorating	29		7	
Fashion & design	14		7	
Hair care	11		2	
'Social graces'	11	48.1	-	11.6
<b>Arts and crafts</b>				
Pottery	16		18	
Artex	-		14	
Weaving	11		6	
Silkscreen printing	-		6	
Other ( <i>embroidery, leather work, macrame, general craft</i> )	3		10	
		22.2		39.1
<b>Other miscellaneous</b>				
Gardening & agriculture	7		2	
Drama, discussion, short stories	10		5	
First aid	4		-	
Guitar	-		7	
Aerobics, yoga, gymnastics	-		8	
Other unspecified	4	18.5	1	16.7
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>135</b>		<b>138</b>

\*In 1972 basic education courses were offered by correspondence whereas in 1984 basic literacy, remedial education and E.S.L. were offered as internal classes.

### 7.2.2. Suggestions for additional courses

Although there was a wide variety of suggestions for additional courses, analysis of broad categories may reveal areas of strong interest and underservicing or conversely, low interest and/or sufficiency of supply.

Table 19 below shows grouped suggestions for additional courses from 45 women of the 1972 study and 40 women in the 1984 study.

**Table 19: Suggestions for additional course categories, 1972 and 1984 (multiple responses)**

Category	1972		1984	
	No.	%	No.	%
Arts and crafts	20	35.1	20	29.4
Physical activities	19	33.3	4	5.9
Music	9	15.8	5	7.4
Intellectual programmes	9	15.8	11	16.2
Vocational courses	-		28	41.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>100.0</b>

While women in 1972 largely advocated more arts and crafts and physical activities, those in 1984 requested vocational courses. From the previous table it appears that none of the 1972 sample was involved in any regular classes for aerobics or other physical activities, hence their suggestions reveal an interest coupled with underservicing of this area. There were strong participation rates for arts and crafts courses for both samples, indicating that suggestions for further activities in this area demonstrate high levels of interest. It appears that there was little desire for vocational courses in 1972, but a strong desire for these in 1984. Suggested vocational courses included bar work, welfare, catering, motor mechanics, hairdressing and management.

### 7.2.3. Changes in course organisation

The women in the 1972 sample were not questioned about the organisation of prison education programmes. The Nagle Report criticized the timetabling of courses and lack of study areas:

"At Mulawa there was a severe limitation on educational courses. Most of them were held in the evening, and were described as 'difficult and partly responsible for the high drop-out rate'. It is not surprising to find the comment from that institution: 'Dormitories are never satisfactory for study'" (p. 242).

In addition, Nagle commented on the short lengths of sentences imposed on about half the prisoners, allowing insufficient time for the com-

pletion of any course. Security classification was also noted as a problem which prevented some women from taking advantage of courses run outside the prison (p. 312).

By 1984, with the building of new accommodation at the women's prison, Silverwater, only one-fifth of the prisoners were housed in dormitory accommodation and 76% of the prisoners were serving sentences greater than twelve months. Although women with appropriate security classifications were, in theory, eligible for release to external colleges, in fact only one woman was studying by external attendance at the time of the research interviews.

Of the 90 respondents, 49 made suggestions for changes to prison education, summarized in Table 20 below.

**Table 20: Suggested areas for change (Multiple responses by 49 women giving suggestions for change)**

Area	No.	%
<b>Organisation</b> <i>(e.g. more frequent classes, rescheduling, larger classes)</i>	28	46.7
<b>Staffing</b> <i>(e.g., more teachers, teachers to come more often, prison tutors)</i>	10	16.7
<b>Equipment</b> <i>(e.g., bigger classrooms, better facilities, greater availability of books)</i>	8	13.3
<b>Eligibility rules</b> <i>(e.g. more prisoners allowed out to attend technical college)</i>	4	6.6
<b>Other</b> <i>(e.g., more privacy and peace of mind to study, more encouragement and interest, should be able to keep the things you make inside with you)</i>	10	16.7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### 7.3. Recreation

No specific questions were asked about sport and recreation in the 1972 study. This probably mirrors the lack of emphasis placed by departmental administrators on the areas of un-

structured recreation and sport, in contrast with other pressing needs.

The 1977 Directory of Corrective Services states:

"A trampoline and sporting equipment such as exercise bikes and a rowing machine are available. However, team sporting activities lapsed through lack of prisoner interest. Indoor recreational facilities include television, table tennis and indoor games which may be used in the recreation rooms on the top floor of the dormitory blocks" (p. 100).

Nagle commented in 1978:

"There is no organized sport and little opportunity for Mulawa prisoners to have any physical exercise. One gains the impression that prisoners spend most of their spare time watching television. There has been some attempt to introduce sport, but this was limited to softball. The women prisoners have fewer facilities than men" (p. 312).

The Nagle Report pointed out that compared with other gaols, sporting facilities available at Mulawa were the worst. Staff attributed this to lack of interest by inmates, while inmates complained that staff actively discouraged sport. The Commission found that there was no evidence that staff actively attempted to foster sports within the gaol (p. 266), and general recommendations relating to sport comprised:

The Prisons Commission should improve sporting facilities. Wherever possible, prison labour should be utilized for this purpose. (Recommendation 123);

Sport should never be stopped as a disciplinary measure (Recommendation 124).

However there were more opportunities for organized sport and greater use of sporting facilities in 1984, according to the interview study.

### 7.3.1. Availability and use of sporting facilities

At Mulawa there were nine different kinds of sports or organised exercise available in 1984: softball, tennis, netball and volleyball played on a multi-purpose court; yoga, aerobics and gymnastics held in the activities room; pool and ping pong played in the wings. Gymnasium equipment included weights and an exercise bike. Other outdoor ball games were organized from time to time.

Norma Parker inmates could participate in five sports: swimming, tennis and netball outdoors, with pool and aerobics as indoor sports. Other

ball games such as volleyball were organized at irregular intervals.

Two-thirds of the women stated that they played a sport in gaol. Those who did not participate in prison sports reported that it was because of competing activities (31% of responses), poor organization of sports (22%), lack of interest in the sports available (22%) or health reasons (16%).

Over half of all the women who participated in sports reported that they played tennis (57%). Next in popularity was softball, with 38% of women who played a sport participating in the game. Each of the other sporting activities was mentioned by fewer than one-quarter of all those who played a sport (see Table 21). However, almost one-third of Norma Parker residents who played sport stated that they used the swimming pool located within the centre and it is likely that this proportion would increase during summer months. On average, the women played sport for 4 to 5 hours weekly.

Table 21: Sports played by women in prison (multiple responses)

Sports	No. of Women	% of 61 Participants
Tennis	35	57
Softball	23	38
Exercise/aerobics	13	22
Gym	12	20
Netball	9	15
Swimming	6*	10
Other (yoga, pool)	6	10
Not stated	4	-

\* At the Norma Parker Centre only.

### 7.3.2. Changes to prison sports

Over half the women (62%) suggested that additional sports should be made available. Swimming was mentioned most frequently (by Mulawa residents) while squash, netball and football were also requested. Typical comments included:

"(Have) more sports. Men get fitter, women get fatter (in gaol). There is too much lady-like emphasis (on prison activities)";

"Take women to the park to play softball, cricket or (throw a) frisbee";

"There is not a great range of sports or training";

"We should have more sports available every day".

Similarly, 59% of the women suggested other changes to prison sports (see Table 22). Women at both gaols strongly advocated improved organization of sports, with more frequent scheduling of sports, more regular times for sports and better notification of sports activities. Women at Mulawa also suggested that more Activities Officers should be employed and that outside competitions, with teams from the community and other gaols, should be organized. Typical comments were:

"There should be another Activities Officer as she is always busy, never had enough time. There should always be one available to do activities with the girls";

"We should have instructors from outside and be allowed to play outside (gaol). There should be more staff. We don't get to sport often enough because there isn't enough staff";

"The gym should be open all the time to do what you want to do";

"More girls should get involved so teams can be organized".

Table 22: Other suggestions for changes to prison sports (*multiple responses by 90 women*)

Suggestion	Number of Women	%*
No change	23	26
Improved organisation of sports ( <i>more regular times for sports, better notification of sports activities</i> )	36	40
Staffing changes ( <i>more Activities Officers, more coaches for sports</i> )	17	19
More outside competition ( <i>with community teams and inter-gaol</i> )	17	19
Better facilities ( <i>more gym equipment, swimming pool at Mulawa</i> )	5	6
Other	2	2
Not known, not stated	14	16

\*Percentages represent the proportion of the 90 respondents making that comment and do not add to 100%.

### 7.3.3. Other spare time activities

The most popular spare time activities for women in 1984, apart from organised sports and courses, comprised reading or writing (reported by 73% of all women), watching T.V. (62%), listening to the radio or music (43%) and just talking with others (39%). Although the majority stated that they engaged in these passive recreational activities, some were involved in creative past-times such as knitting or crochet (16%), playing a musical instrument (7%), drawing or painting (4%) or needlework (4%).

Half of the women suggested that changes should be made to spare time activities. Many different changes were requested, but most frequently the women asked for more activities, better organisation of spare time activities and more facilities. A number of comments emphasized the boredom and restrictions of routine prison life:

"Do something different, just to get out of here - go and visit a park, go rockclimbing, fishing, canoeing or horse riding";

"Should go on trips outside. We are locked in from 5pm until morning";

"It would be nice to be able to go for a walk after work, around the grass inside Mulawa";

"Bring in a group to sing every couple of months - not just religious stuff";

"You only find out as things happen - they don't tell you until you ask e.g. wool. You see people knitting and you figure you must be able to get wool".

### 7.4. Discussion

Little change could be discerned over the period 1972-1984 in the types of work performed by women in prison. Jobs were largely related to domestic cooking, cleaning and laundering, with sewing the main industrial activity.

However, marked changes could be seen in the educational courses offered to the women. Many of these changes probably reflect sensitivity to the changing characteristics of women prisoners: compared with the 1972 inmates, women prisoners in 1984 tended to be younger, with higher rates of completion of secondary education, although with similar proportions having completed courses attempted after leaving school. The key change to prison education appeared to be in the emphasis on remedial and vocational courses with a corresponding decline in 'traditional feminine' areas. However, the women in 1984 expressed a strong desire for even more vocational education, in fields such as bar work, motor mechanics and catering. This could reflect greater economic pressure, such as

higher levels of unemployment than in 1972, or social expectations that women should engage in work outside the home.

The greatest change in leisure activities over the twelve year period appeared to be an increasing interest in sport and exercise. About two-thirds of women prisoners participated in sports or organized exercise, for an average period of 4½ hours weekly. Again, this interest would partly reflect the younger population, as well as greater community awareness of physical fitness.

It is clear that the 1972 programme of domestic work, courses in traditional areas of the home and feminine skills and emphasis on passive recreational pursuits reflected common assumptions about female roles. In an attempt to reform female criminals, these programmes were offered as a means of channelling attitudes and behaviour towards those acceptable amongst middle class women. To what extent had these underlying assumptions changed by 1984? It has been noted that the criteria for assessing women's programmes in the 1980s must include the notions of equal opportunity and respect of individual rights. As the NSW Task Force on Women in Prison pointed out:

"Equal treatment and opportunity means that equality must be reflected in the range and quality of opportunities offered. Small numbers, the separation of the sexes, or traditional role beliefs are no longer relevant factors to excuse inequality" (p. 226).

Certainly work opportunities for women in 1984 were greatly restricted in comparison with male prisoners, and still centred around the traditional domestic role of women. Only two work release positions were available. While attempts had been made to meet the needs of women prisoners with technical and remedial courses, these were nonetheless limited in scope and access to external study was severely restricted. It was only in the area of sport and exercise that the right of women to sufficient, varied activities appeared to be met for a majority of prisoners. However the range of activities would not compare with those available for male prisoners.

Within each of the programme areas major recommendations for change emerged. These will be discussed in detail below.

#### 7.4.1. Work in prison

Under the 1984 system of paying a minimum rate of \$7 per week for unskilled work, with a weekly buy-up limit of \$12, there was discrimination against those without private cash. Moreover the buy-up system which allows the women to purchase a few extra items of food, toiletries, cigarettes or make-up is an important contribution

to prisoner morale. It appears that wages paid for work in prison should be reviewed.

It was reported that some wing sweepers only worked for a few hours each day. If fewer women were allocated to domestic jobs then more women could be freed to work in industries. Suggestions made by women and staff for additional industries included market gardening, cartooning, printing and small scale farming and these should be carefully assessed. In addition, technical jobs traditionally undertaken by males in metalwork, woodwork, etc. should not be overlooked, and more specialized work in information processing could be considered. The possibility of employing more women in typing or clerical jobs in the gaol could also be investigated since many wished to obtain secretarial skills and work in this area on release.

#### 7.4.2. Work on release

Three-quarters of the women expressed a desire to work after their release from prison, while half of the respondents requested training for employment. This contrasts with the situation of women at the time of their arrest, when three-quarters of the women who were interviewed were unemployed.

In order to help them obtain work after their imprisonment the women requested more vocational courses and more opportunities to attend local technical colleges. While secretarial studies seemed popular, the women expressed interest in a wide range of courses from blacksmithing to radio script writing. The feasibility of releasing more women to attend technical courses of individual interest should be investigated. This would involve changing classification criteria so that women from Mulawa could attend external courses or increasing the capacity of a lower security establishment for women prisoners.

More help in finding a job on release was also requested. Many women thought that a specific position of Employment Officer should be established, while others commented on aspects of that role such as compiling a list of possible employers, liaising with the CES and arranging for local newspapers to be available to job seekers.

#### 7.4.3. Work release

Two major recommendations concerning the Work Release Scheme emerged from the 1984 study. Firstly, the Work Release Scheme should be extended to allow more women to participate. This would ensure greater equity with male prisoners. It would involve changing the selection criteria so that more women were eligible and rapid processing of eligible cases.

In addition, those on the scheme advocated separate accommodation for work release par-

ticipants, with adequate staffing rostered to provide continuity of contact for those on work release. If the scheme were extended then separate accommodation and staffing could be provided more economically.

#### 7.4.4. Education

Major issues arising from the 1984 study centred around the strong demand for more vocational courses and for organizational changes including more frequent classes, rescheduling of classes, more teachers, and better equipment.

Considering the needs of women prisoners, their requests and the principles of equity and individual rights the NSW Women in Prison Task Force recommended that a comprehensive programmes package be developed. Components should include work, work skills, education, life skills, pre-work preparation, crafts, home maintenance and home management. It was recommended that each inmate should be allowed to choose an individually tailored timetable and programme, with equal pay for every full programme package. This would ensure that those women who chose full-time education were not disadvantaged in comparison with those choosing full-time work. Base rates could be supplemented with bonus earnings for extra work or higher levels of attainment. It was also noted that such a package could generate self-esteem and a sense of personal worth and achievement.

These recommendations appear admirably suited to the revealed needs of women prisoners in 1984 and are consistent with the principles upon which changes should be based.

#### 7.4.5. Leisure

Interview data revealed strong interest in sports and physically demanding activities, together with relatively high rates of participation. Suggestions for change included the provision of more sports and better organization of these activities.

The NSW Task Force on Women in Prison noted that:

"Activities and recreation programmes should reflect prisoner interest, be flexible enough to cater for minority interests and should be interesting and motivating. Activities, recreation, education and work commitments should be complementary, not contradictory" (p. 237).

To this end the Task Force recommended that a professional recreation programme be established at each of the women's prisons, with activities co-ordinated by the Senior Education Officer. Regular input from community sporting teams was also suggested, together with regular,

formal consultation between the recreational officer and prisoners to ensure that current interests were met in flexible programmes.

These arrangements should also ensure a greater variety in passive recreation. Some of the women suggested that occasional 'treats' such as concerts and outings would improve prisoner morale through relieving boredom and providing anticipation of pleasure in the future.

## Chapter 8: RELATIONSHIPS IN PRISON

A woman's prison is a closed, single-sex community in which relationships may be exaggerated as a result of the pressures of confinement. As Sandra Willson, ex-prisoner and active worker for released prisoners and drug addicts, wrote of her experiences of the 1970s:

"Ordinary day-to-day tensions that the average person outside can healthily release is not allowed to be released in the prison system. If I get angry, rightfully angry, outside, I can shout, swear and people listening will approve. But in gaol, I can be locked up for swearing and locked up for yelling. I am creating a disturbance, upsetting other women and not showing respect for authority. And, goddamn it, there are some things that one needs to yell about; some things that require good, strong, well-phrased expressions. But not in gaol! Quite often, many of the women are walking fuse-boxes who need the merest excuse to explode" (in Mukherjee & Scutt, 1981, p. 201).

Tensions within a prisoner may result from news of outside events over which she has no control, such as the illness of a family member; alternatively tensions may stem from enforced interactions with other prisoners, dependent and subordinate status in relation to prison staff, and personal reactions to loss of freedom.

In addition, stereotyped views of female sexuality distort prison relationships. Women prisoners are segregated in all-female institutions as a means of protecting them from sexual advances by male prisoners. Moreover, as Price (1977) stated:

"The zeal to protect the woman offender from the moral depravity of homosexuality also cordons her off from human companionship. Congregation is discouraged by architectural design and prohibited by regulations; isolation is achieved within the prison as well as from the society at large" (p. 106).

The gender composition of the prison staff may certainly affect relationships between staff and prisoners. Feinman (in Hatty, 1984) pointed out that prison reformers in the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth centuries achieved sex-segregated staffing and prisons by convincing legislators that pious and pure staff could reform the female criminals by their example within a domestic atmosphere. It was only as a result of the women's rights movement in the U.S. that integrated prison staffing was established in the 1970s. In NSW women officers first worked as equals with male staff in a male prison unit, known as the Special Care Unit, in 1981. A little later, male officers were employed within the women's prisons at Mulawa and Norma Parker.

No specific questions were asked about prison relationships in the 1972 study. Hence, material will be cited from the 1984 interview study, with comments drawn from the Nagle Report and the Report of the NSW Task Force on Women in Prison.

### 8.1. Problems between Inmates

About one-third of the women prisoners stated that there were no problems between inmates. Those who perceived problems mentioned a range of causes from stealing, bitchiness and drugs to overcrowding and "dobbing" (see Table 23). A smaller proportion of women at Norma Parker reported any problems between inmates than at Mulawa. Norma Parker residents were more likely to report bitchiness or "dobbing" than their Mulawa counterparts.

Typical comments from both centres concerning problems between inmates were:

"Smokes - you used to get enough but now smokes are getting ripped off because there isn't enough";

"Dope - some people have it, others want it";

"Drugs. So much in here - people under the influence get aggro";

"(Having) first time prisoners with prisoners who have been in many times leads to standovers by experienced prisoners".

The five women who commented on the stealing of rations at Mulawa stated that extra food rations, such as milk, coffee, honey and jam, were delivered to the wing for each prisoner every morning. However those women who worked outside the wing were unable to collect their rations until after 3.30 p.m. By this time, they asserted, their rations had been used by others.

**Table 23: Problems between inmates**  
(multiple responses by 90 women)

Problem	Number of prisoners	%
Nothing - no problems between inmates	37	32
Stealing of cigarettes, clothes, rations	16	14
Gossip, bitchiness, petty clashes	16	14
Drugs	9	8
General conditions restrictions	7	6
Boredom	6	5
Favouritism	6	5
Overcrowding	6	5
Mixture of different types of prisoners	5	4
"Dobbing"	5	4
Other: laziness, sexual jealousy, language differences lack of responsibility	4	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>100</b>

### 8.2. Problems between Inmates and staff

Only 19% of all the women interviewed asserted that relationships between inmates and Prison Officers were free of problems. Most commonly, problems were attributed to the attitudes and behaviour of Prison Officers such as alleged favouritism, arrogance, sarcasm, goading and petty applications of prison rules (see Table 24).

The women talked about problems such as inconsistency between Prison Officers, lack of responsibility given to inmates and strict rules. Typical comments included:

"They treat us like children and expect us to jump at their every command";

"They react differently to different inmates. There are personality clashes when one person has all the power";

"Screws speak to you like dirt. They can say what they like and you can't react, you just have to accept it";

"Prison Officers playing petty games e.g. one officer tries to get me cranky, always rides you";

"Hanging up on phone calls. They just say "Time's up" and hang up without letting you finish";

"Backstabbing. Prison Officers say

one thing to one inmate and something else to another and forget inmates talk".

**Table 24: Problems between inmates and officers (multiple responses by 90 women)**

Problem	Number of prisoners
Nothing - we get on all right	19
Favouritism or inconsistency	12
<b>Attitudes of officers:</b>	
arrogance	11
sarcasm	6
goading	8
other	19
Petty application of rules	5
Lack of privacy	9
Lack of responsibility or say	5
Other*	4
Not stated	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

\* Includes prisoners refusing to obey an order, strict rules on hair styles, not being allowed in other inmates' rooms.

### 8.3. Preference for male or female staff

The women were asked whether they thought Education Officers, Welfare Officers, Psychologists, and Probation and Parole Officers should be male or female. A minority (43%) felt that the sex of these staff members was important. The majority of this group preferred about half to be males and half females.

In contrast, the women strongly preferred female prison officers to male prison officers. Only 8% stated that they would like most or all of the prison officers to be male. Over one-quarter

**Table 25: Proportion of males to females - non custodial staff**

Proportion preferred	Number of prisoners	%
All female staff	6	7
Mostly female staff, some male	3	3
About half female, half male	28	31
Mostly male staff, some female	2	2
All male staff	-	-
Don't care	51	56
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>100</b>

(28%) suggested that all prison officers in their gaol should be female while a little over half the respondents (53%) preferred some officers of each sex, in equal proportions or with females predominating (see Table 26).

**Table 26: Proportion of male and female custodial officers**

Proportion preferred	Number of prisoners	%
All prison officers women	25	28
Most women, some men	15	17
About half women, half men	32	35
Most men, some women	5	6
All men	2	2
Don't care	11	12
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>100</b>

Those who preferred at least some male prison officers commented that having some in the gaol improved the atmosphere, that they were less sarcastic and "bitchy" and they gave women (both inmates and staff) more security. Negative comments generally related to having males in the accommodation blocks where the women could be undressing or in scanty clothing, and where personal items were kept.

Comments about male prison officers referred to above were made spontaneously. However all respondents were asked if having male prison officers in the gaol caused any particular problems. About one-third reported that there were no problems. Others complained about male officers walking into their rooms when they were changing or showering, or just being in the accommodation area without warning (17%). Room searches and strip searches were embarrassing for some women when conducted by male officers. Ten women complained of male officers "perving" while six women alleged that male officers were intimidating (see Table 27).

Typical comments about having male prison officers included:

"Lack of privacy - it gives you a funny feeling to have a male around while you are sleeping";

"We have little enough privacy and they go searching through personal stuff which you don't want a male to see";

"When they're rostered in the wings you have to make sure you're dressed when they unlock in the morning";

"Officers from men's gaols are too



harsh. They don't realize we're not as rough as men".

**Table 27: Problems resulting from the appointment of male prison officers (multiple responses by 90 women)**

Problem	Number of Prisoners	%
No problems with male officers	44	35
Problems in the wings	22	17
Room searches	12	10
"Perving"	10	8
Dress is restricted	7	5
Strip searches	6	5
Intimidation or harsh treatment	6	5
Other	18	14
Not stated	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>100</b>

#### 8.4. Discussion

Problems and tensions between inmates must be expected in a situation marked by personal stress and enforced association with other prisoners in various activities. However, some of these problems could be alleviated by structural, programme and minor procedural changes.

Since overcrowding was seen as a source of inmate tension it was argued that more space for relaxation within the accommodation blocks and outdoors was needed. Both space and facilities for leisure activities would help to alleviate the boredom which was seen as a problem in itself and also as contributing to petty clashes between inmates.

The problem of stealing between prisoners may be reduced somewhat if the women were allocated small lockers in which they could store cigarettes and valuable items. Thefts of rations could be prevented by issuing them to prisoners directly at their work location or by wing officers issuing rations to women only as they returned to the wing.

Problems caused by drugs within the gaol do not have an easy solution. It is apparently impossible to prevent drugs from coming into the prison under present rules and procedures, and all steps taken to reduce the supplies inside must be evaluated against their oppressive effects on the prison environment. The provision of prescribed methadone to declared addicts who desire it, together with eclectic rehabilitation programmes and separated detoxification facilities would ap-

pear the best approach (see Miner and Gorta, 1986).

Problems between inmates and staff were largely attributed by inmates to the attitudes of officers. However, it is possible to structure different staff/inmate relationships with approaches such as unit management, coupled with ongoing staff development. Key features of unit management include consultation between inmates and staff on the running of a small unit and continuity of unit staff. Such a participatory management system was advocated by the NSW Task Force on Women in Prison (p. 259) and is consistent with suggestions for empowerment made by Hatty (1984).

A major source of tension for the women prisoners appeared to be the employment of male prison officers. Specifically, problems stemmed from their presence in accommodation areas and most of the women would have favoured the removal of male prison officers from posts in the wings.

While the issue of female officers in male prisons was discussed more fully by Nagle (1978) he nonetheless recommended the employment of male staff in women's prisons "provided the demands of privacy and dignity of the inmates are met" (p. 185). He went on to state:

"There are advantages in consciously pursuing this policy. However, there must be a careful choice of job allocation of the prison officer concerned. There is nothing radical in this suggestion. Women are employed in male prisons in Victoria and male and female prison officers are completely interchangeable overseas.

Female officers could be of more value as hostages in a male institution. This factor should be borne in mind in the allocation of jobs to female prison officers, but it should not cause the Department to alter its declared policy that it will not bargain with prisoners who seize hostages whether male or female".

Feinman made a number of practical suggestions relating to an integrated prison staffing that maintained privacy. These deserve careful consideration (in Hatty, 1984, pp. 79-80):

"Those who believe that the full integration of male and female prison staff is a desirable goal also believe that there are ways in which the potential disadvantages listed above can be mitigated or eliminated. Security issues may be resolved if safe and humane prison conditions are established for staff and prisoners.

The issue of prisoners' rights to privacy may be resolved if new institutions are designed and structural changes made in existing prisons that provide for the privacy of male and female prisoners regardless of the sex of staff; these might include shoulder-height partitions in front of toilets and showers. In addition, codes of behaviour for staff and prisoners dealing with situations such as pat and body searches and dressing may prove to be a benefit for staff as well as prisoners. A statement of expected behaviour will protect the privacy rights for prisoners and reduce the possibility of legal action against staff for violation of these rights.

Romantic entanglement between male and female staff and prisoners may not be a problem if staff is properly trained to act professionally and if codes of ethical behaviour are established and enforced."

## Chapter 9: DISCUSSION

It is very difficult to assess compliance with either the recommendations of the Nagle Report (1978) or standard minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners (1955) because of lack of data and the level of interpretation required for objective evaluation. The methodology of this study was limited to the reports of women prisoners and official documents as sources of information about prison conditions. Exhaustive administrative enquiries, as exemplified in the Nagle Report, were not feasible. As a result, some areas of inquiry were neglected and the data obtained must be interpreted with regard to possible bias and omission.

A related aim of the study was to assess the extent to which prison conditions for women indicated change towards empowerment and equity. Again, these terms are very difficult to define operationally and the literature provides examples rather than rigorous definitions. However, no systematic study of this kind had been done in Australia. It was important to begin to analyse tangible changes in prison conditions as a means of exploring the implications of a "justice model" of corrections (as espoused by Nagle (1978), Bottomley (1979) and others) for women.

### 9.1. Accommodation

Major changes occurring over the period 1972-1984 comprised the construction of new single cell accommodation at Mulawa, and some

separation according to classification through the opening of the Norma Parker Centre. It should be noted that since the study was completed accommodation for approximately forty women has also become available in a separate wing of Bathurst Gaol, a country facility. These major changes follow the Nagle recommendations and the spirit of the United Nations Rules.

According to women prisoners, single cell accommodation is desirable for privacy, personal space and reduced harassment. According to departmental accommodation returns, over the last two decades at least, the norm for male prisoners was single cells except at times of acute overcrowding. However, when the women's prison was moved from Long Bay to Silverwater in 1970, the new accommodation comprised dormitories. Thus in comparison with most male prisoners, female prisoners were disadvantaged. Even in 1984 a sizeable proportion of women prisoners were still denied single cells. To achieve long-term equality with male prisoners with respect to accommodation, women should be given priority for new single cell accommodation.

It has also been stated that because of the smaller female prison population, classification cannot be implemented in the same way as for men with different centres allowing variations in security. There are a number of alternatives to the current situation in which the majority of female prisoners are housed in maximum security conditions at Mulawa. Separate units of different security could be built on the Silverwater site or on another site in the metropolitan area, or smaller facilities having varying classifications could be constructed on a number of metropolitan sites. On the basis of data collected in this study, it is not possible to choose between the majority and minority recommendations of the NSW Task Force on Women in Prison. However, it must be emphasized that separation of women who have lower security classifications is essential for equality with male prisoners. Another possibility would be to house female prisoners in separate accommodation units within gaols for male prisoners. This may allow women prisoners to use a wider range of facilities and to share work, education and leisure opportunities with males. On the other hand, approximately equal numbers of both sexes would be required to avoid discrimination against women as a minority group in prison. If women prisoners were dispersed amongst a number of regional male prisons, their families would be disadvantaged by increased travelling for visits, since the majority of female prisoners lived in the Sydney area prior to their sentence.

## 9.2. Health

It is difficult to assess the extent to which changes were made to health services for women prisoners in compliance with the Nagle Report. Prisoners were not questioned in depth about medical services in 1972 and changes were not documented in detail in official reports. The methodology of this study was also limited, and the possibility of distortion and bias through taking the views of users only must be acknowledged. However, it is clear that illness and medical care issues were of great concern to both the 1972 and 1984 samples. For these reasons an independent review of medical and dental services is advocated.

Women prisoners requested greater choice and availability of medical and dental staff. This approach is supported as means of normalization, or making prison conditions more comparable with standards in the community. In addition, this approach would give women prisoners greater control over their own bodies.

A discussion of the medical needs of heroin users is presented more fully in Miner and Gorta (1986). Again, provision of separate detoxification and treatment facilities is desirable as a means of promoting equity with users outside the prison.

## 9.3. Links with family and friends

Following the Nagle Report regulations concerning communication with significant others were liberalized, despite some difficulties due to staffing constraints and overcrowding of the visiting area. However, in contrast to comments and recommendations of the Nagle Report, the Mothers and Babies Unit was closed in 1981.

There is little information to demonstrate how women perceived their limited opportunities for contacts as a separate study on this issue was planned, but not completed, for the Women in Prison Task Force. It is nonetheless clear that a very liberal visiting policy should be implemented as a right and as a means of facilitating adjustment after release.

The re-establishment of a Mothers and Babies Unit is strongly recommended. Such a unit would affect about one-fifth of the women in prison and should be considered as a means of ensuring equality with mothers outside. In addition, it should be seen as addressing the right of the child for a close relationship with the mother.

Empowerment in this context should include adequate information about older children, especially those in foster care, adequate visiting arrangements for older children and help in seeking access to children on release.

## 9.4. Programmes

There was little change in the work performed by women prisoners over the period 1972-1984: it was largely domestic. However, following the spirit of the Nagle Report increased opportunities for remedial and vocational education were provided. Few details concerning specific facilities for sport and leisure were available over this period but it appears that the women were showing a greater interest in sport and active leisure activities.

It has already been noted that women prisoners are disadvantaged in comparison with male prisoners because of their smaller numbers. This in turn limits work opportunities and the range of educational and leisure courses available in face to face classes. On the basis of equity, more flexible, individually tailored programmes are advocated in these areas, as recommended by the NSW Task Force on Women in Prison.

Also, women prisoners have been disadvantaged in the past by the emphasis on traditional female skills in work and education. They should be given the opportunity to move towards a variety of roles in the community. To this end, correspondence courses would not be sufficient: access to classes within the prison and in the community is required. It is acknowledged that an extension of leave for educational purposes would require changes to classification procedures, together with an increase in accommodation for low security prisoners. However, this is considered important as a means of providing for real choice in the community on release.

## 9.5. Relationships in prison

It is not possible to delineate changes in this area since relationships were not investigated in the 1972 study. This study revealed problem areas and suggested changes that would follow Nagle's principle of prison as punishment, not for punishment, and improve relationships.

Inmate-staff relationships should be structured within a unit management system. This would allow for a greater sharing of information, greater access to the decision making process by prisoners and provide a forum for problem resolution.

If male staff are employed in women's prisons then privacy of inmates must be ensured through appropriate facilities and clear procedures that will protect prisoners and benefit staff.

## 9.6. Empowerment and equity

The principles of empowerment and equity have been applied to each of the areas discussed above. In summary, empowerment can apply to women prisoners in three ways. Firstly, if women

are given greater choice over details of their daily lives in prison, they are empowered. Choices may extend to which medical practitioner to consult in gaol, which job or course or leisure activity to undertake or whether to care for young children within a prison setting. Extending the range of small choices allows for the power of greater self-determination, even within a restrictive environment.

Secondly, women can be empowered through participation in decision making. In the past grievance committees were established, but lapsed for various reasons when other channels of complaint such as letters to the Ombudsman, were instituted. However there is a need for women to have some power to suggest changes in prison policy. In some gaols, unit management systems in which inmates and unit staff meet regularly to discuss local issues and make recommendations to gaol management, operate with varying degrees of effectiveness. Such a system would allow women to express grievances, but related procedures to ensure that recommendations were considered and that feedback was given to the women would be essential.

Finally, women can be empowered to change themselves if they choose to do so. Personal development could encompass formal programmes such as education, counselling or therapeutic communities for drug users, and informal opportunities to reflect in solitude. The latter would require both accommodation changes to ensure privacy and procedures to allow periods of aloneness.

Whereas this study has specifically addressed conditions for female prisoners, it should be emphasized that these three general principles also apply to male prisoners. Indeed, a similar study of male prisons in order to generate specific recommendations relating to male prisoners would be most desirable. In this way, the principle of equity (in the limited sense of equality between male and female prisoners) could be applied more widely.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. All dormitory accommodation for women should be replaced by single cell accommodation.
2. Units of accommodation should allow for the separation of prisoners according to classification and unsentenced/sentenced status. From time to time separate accommodation may be required for specific treatment programmes and this should be considered in planning.
3. An independent review of medical and dental services should be conducted.
4. Separate detoxification facilities should be provided for women undergoing drug withdrawal.
5. More doctors and dentists should be employed, perhaps on a sessional basis, to treat women in prison and to allow them some choice of practitioner.
6. A mothers and babies unit should be re-established.
7. A larger visiting area should be constructed.
8. Additional staff should be employed to facilitate visits.
9. Recommendation 191 of the NSW Women in Prison Task Force for a comprehensive programmes package should be implemented.
10. A unit management system should be established.
11. Privacy of women prisoners should be considered in the design or renovation of accommodation units and in the implementation of surveillance procedures.

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