

Media Release

The Hon Natalie Hutchins MP

Minister for Crime Prevention

Minister for Corrections

Minister for Youth Justice

Minister for Victim Support



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MORE HOUSING AND JOB SUPPORT FOR WOMEN LEAVING PRISON

Women leaving prison will now have more support for housing security, financial independence and improved employment prospects.

The Andrews Labor Government has expanded the services provided by registered housing provider Women's Housing Limited at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre to include a \$2.8 million program to divert women on short sentences and remand into housing and support programs.

The program will assist women leaving prison find accommodation and referrals to services such as legal assistance.

The program is complemented by a new service that seeks to improve women's access to employment when they return to life in the community. Women's Employment Specialists are now working across the prison system to improve job prospects for women in preparation for their release.

This includes providing pathways for women to employer groups that match industry needs, and providing better access to non-traditional industries, such as trades, logistics, engineering and construction.

The employment program is part of a wider \$5.8 million initiative that includes family engagement workers and a family therapy service which highlights the key role family plays in rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners.

The Government is also securing training and education needs of prisoners with two Vocational Education and Training Centres of Excellence (COE) to be established at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre in the coming financial year.

The COE will provide employment services, such as referrals and links to employers and industry groups, and will include a 12-week intensive hospitality and catering program and an intensive civil construction program.

Three additional Aboriginal women's support workers have also been engaged to expand the legal and transition support service that Djirra provides Aboriginal women in prison.

The Government is also pleased to announce the appointment of the Member for Wendouree, Juliana Addison as the Chair of the Women's Correctional Services Advisory Committee – a two-year voluntary position.

Established in 2003, the committee provides independent advice to the Minister for Corrections to inform gender-responsive approaches to policies, programs and services for women in the corrections system.

Ms Addison is replacing previous Chair, Ingrid Stitt MP, who became a Minister in late 2020.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Corrections Natalie Hutchins

"Helping women leaving prison turn their lives around with suitable housing, employment and training provides future security, and will help reduce their chances of re-offending."

"Juliana brings together her passion and experience in health and employment for vulnerable Victorians to this new role, and I congratulate her on her appointment."

Quote attributable to Women's Correctional Services Advisory Committee Chair Juliana Addison

"I welcome the opportunity to work with diverse and expert stakeholders to address the complex challenges facing women offenders and to provide strategic advice to the Minister about our correctional services and programs."

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