Mothers offending against their role: An Australian experience

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Background

From 1992 to 1995 the author conducted a study entitled *Incarcerated mothers and children: Impact of prison environments* (IMCIPE) in Australia and England. While the IMCIPE study was a comparative international study conducted across two countries, this paper deals specifically with the Australian component of the study and presents selected findings and implications for policies that support inmate mothers and their families.

The IMCIPE study examined the impact of imprisonment on incarcerated mothers and their young children aged birth to eight years, that is mothers whose children live with them in custody and mothers who are separated from their children. The study used a qualitative methodology involving a cycle of policy analyses and over 130 interviews with inmates and staff in nine custodial centres for women and their respective corrections systems in the three Australian states of Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria and in the UK (See Table 1 for a summary of the research program). Systematic observations of the prisons were also conducted in conjunction with the policy analysis and interview regimen. As such, the IMCIPE study entered the confines of what Burkhart describes as the 'concrete womb' to examine its impact on those it claims as its own (1973: 1). Here the apt metaphor of the female womb, as a nourishing, life-giving environment is vividly contrasted with the rigid, concrete confines of Australian prisons.

Each Australian state in the study, except New South Wales, made some provision for inmate mothers and their children to live together in custody (See Table 2 for facilities for mothers and babies). However, unlike the English prisons in the study which each had a purpose-built mother and baby unit, only one Australian prison, Tarrengower (in Victoria) had a purpose-designed facility for mothers and children. In the state of Queensland, the Queensland Corrective Services Commission allowed children to reside at either Brisbane Women's (a closed prison) or Helena Jones (a community release centre). There was no fixed upper age limit for the child who was to be accommodated with the mother, but the majority of children in both Queensland centres were young with many born in local hospitals during their mothers' sentence and others entering in the early months of infancy. In the state of New South Wales, the NSW Department of Corrections prohibited children from residing at either of its two Sydney-based prisons, Mulawa (a highly fortified medium-maximum security prison)

and Norma Parker (a pre-release centre). And in Victoria, there was provision for mothers to share a room with their child, from infancy to preschool age at either Fairlea (a highly fortified multi-security centre) or Tarrengower (a minimum security centre).

In brief, the major findings of the Australian component of the study that are discussed in this paper are as follows:

(i)   The philosophy of incarceration, the mode of containment in male-constructed prisons, the prison rules and regulations run counter to the actual range of needs of incarcerated mothers and of their young children.

(iii)   Maintenance of family ties is seen by inmates and their families as important for the rehabilitation of the inmate mother and for the welfare of her children.

(iii)   Inmate mothers need support from 'significant others' (within and/or outside the prison) to cope with the dual roles of prisoner and mother.

(iv)   While the mother was in custody, the maternal grandmother, and occasionally both the grandmother and the grandfather, were usually the primary caregivers of her dependent children (See Table 3 for the primary caregivers of children whose mothers were in custody).

(v)   The relative geographic isolation of prisons from the inmate's home, where the children may be residing, precludes many families from regular and sustained visits (See Table 4 for geographic spread of families).

Such findings have implications for correctional policies which:

(i)   recognise the specific needs of inmate mothers and their families;
(ii)   provide for the maintenance of family ties;
(iii)   encourage support for the inmate mother from people both within and   outside the prison;
(iv)   support grandparents and those caring for the children on the outside;
(v)   facilitate visits and communication between inmates and families.

This paper is arguing that the realisation of such policies, however, is severely impeded by pervading views about women and mothers, especially those who are seen as offenders.

Theoretical background

Historical studies of criminality have found that policies for the containment of offending women have tended to be based on theories of criminality which gave biological and psychological accounts of causality (Windschuttle, 1981). In contrast to these theoretical explanations, there has been, particularly in the last decade, a major growth in feminist scholarship and a substantial ensuing literature in the areas of law and criminology (Carlen and Worrall, 1987; Carrington, 1993; Genders and Player 1987; Mann, 1984; Scutt, 1981; Smart, 1984, 1990, 1992, 1995; Worrall, 1990). This wave of literature acknowledges that women within the criminal justice system are 'muted' (Worrall, 1990), and it is, therefore, necessary to engage in a process of "listening to and hearing the experience of women in their diversity" (Smart, 1990: 1). Also, Dalton (1995) in reviewing feminist legal thought, argues that the law exercises power in disqualifying women's experience and knowledge. The methodology of the IMCIPE study was purposefully constructed to listen to subordinated inmate women whose voices had hitherto been silenced by the law.

In addition, prisons have been characteristically made by men for men (Tomasevski, 1993). Heidensohn (1985) has pointed out that women's prisons have been developed from a model originally designed for men, and Genders and Player (1987) argue that this practice creates a "lack of fit" which generates ironies and contradictions for women inmates. In the IMCIPE study, this lack of fit was evident in the institutional ecology of the prison, in the nature of custodial supervision and in the security demands of the prison which negated the human needs of mothers and children.

Furthermore, American authors such as Pollock-Byrne (1990) and British authors such as Carlen and Worrall (1987) and Smart (1992) have theorised the relationship between the position of women in society and their representation and treatment in the criminal justice and penal system. The IMCIPE study examined the policies that are intended to set boundaries to the lives of women and to 'regulate womanhood' through *en masse* containment (Smart, 1992: 1).

Carlen (1988: 17) further agues that women's criminality is related to their material and ideological conditions which are qualitatively different from those of men and states that "When women break the law they do so in an attempt to apply individualistic remedies to the social inequities stemming from class exploitation, sexism and racism". Furthermore, Scutt (1981), the Australian feminist lawyer and author, argues that criminal laws have been drafted to perpetuate the dependence of women and to maintain the *status quo.*

Where women are concerned, the law has been drawn with reference to the way in which men define women, as dependant wives with no ability to make decisions; or as wretched whores responsible for their ability to lead men into committing offences against them.

(Scutt, 1981: 17)

Worrall (1990) suggests that professionals and experts within the criminal justice system define certain women as being those who require incarceration and, in turn, perpetuate the oppression of women. These women are seen as "bad girls" or as "sexually immoral" because they have abrogated their female role and, moreover, their maternal role (Pollock-Byrne, 1990: 54). In the IMCIPE study the classification and oppression of offending mothers were particularly evident in the definitions of inmate mothers provided by male custodial staff. Even prisoner clothing, was seen to perpetuate the conformist dependence of inmates on more powerful others.

A complementary body of feminist literature has developed theoretical perspectives on the social construction of women as mothers. Smart (1984) points out that marriage as a legal status perpetuates women's dependence within marriage and the family. She sees the social construction of women in marriage and the family as leading to their oppression through institutionalisation and economic and ideological oppression. Australian social scientists such as Reiger (1995) and Wearing (1984) concur that motherhood and the role of a "good mother" are socially constructed and learned notions that are socially reinforced, especially by the mass media. Betsy Wearing's (1984) study of Australian women describes the ideological construction of motherhood as being a collection of ideas, beliefs, values and practices which legitimise men's social power and maintain women's primary responsibility for child-rearing. Moreover, the social construction of women as mothers defines them as primary caregivers of their children.

The Australian setting

Female offending, especially by those who are mothers, therefore, has long challenged society's vision of women as nurturing, responsive caregivers. Not only are offending mothers seen to abrogate the socially constructed female ideal and to exhibit anti-feminine behavior, but they are also seen to contravene their primary maternal role.

This is no new phenomenon. In her review of female prisoners in New South Wales since 1788, Johnson (1988: 126) stated,

The female convicts were taken on board the ships of the first fleets often naked and filthy and were frequently sold to the marines during the journey from England for a tipple of rum. Both on the journey and in the colony the women were regarded as a thousand times worse than the men; difficult, unruly and beyond redemption. For any digression they could be flogged, put in prison, have their heads shaved or receive a ducking. While they were a severely despised class of convict, they were seen as necessary to serve the utilitarian ends of maintaining the heterosexuality of the colony and of bearing the progeny of the new society.

Paradoxically, these female offenders were used to procreate the society from which they had been forcibly removed.

Despite Australia's considerable history of incarceration, it has only been in recent decades that, within criminology and corrections, any distinction in terms of policy has been made between female inmates and their male counterparts. During the course of the IMCIPE study, a female officer in a Queensland women's prison reflecting on her professional experience over the last decade confirmed that female inmates have only recently been recognised as women:

Things like underpants were recycled, their hair was cut like men because of lice...they weren't recognised as women...regulations and all those things that run prisons were all geared to men.

Even some contemporary Australian prisons still insist on "clothing that is dull, oppressive and badly fitting...certainly adds to that castaway feeling" (Hampton, 1993: 58). While certain cosmetic changes may have been made in some establishments in Australia, the impact of gendered policies and institutional practices needs further examination. We need to look carefully at the unique experiences of women inmates rather than to subsume the needs of women inmates into the needs of their male counterparts;

Although the rhetoric of rights and equality has helped empower women prisoners in some cases, there is reason to be sceptical of any reform attempts that merely try to make women equal to men instead of addressing women inmates' unique experiences.

(Moffat 1991: 191)

Similarly, Wynne-Hughes' (1988) critique of female corrections in Australia warned against an over-simplified principle of parity, that is, that programs for women offenders and prisoners should simply be equivalent to those provided for men. She urged policy-

makers to reject the notion that the standards or the norms for women in corrections should continue to be based on the experience of male prisoners. This view is shared by the New South Wales organisation *Children of prisoners* which contends that

> *The cycle of assumptions and prejudices have conspired to preclude change. There are assumptions that justice is equal regardless of race, gender and socioeconomic background; that imprisonment is a suitable remedy for social infringements; that criminals alone suffer the punishment; that a majority race is better equipped to make judgements for minority ones; that a prisoner is necessarily a bad parent and that a child's welfare is a relevant consideration in the decisions regarding the criminal justice system.*

<div align="right">(Children of Prisoners Newsletter, 1992: 2)</div>

These lines of argument support the rationale that female inmates, especially those who are mothers of young children, have particular needs, needs which have been hitherto relatively overlooked in the research literature.

Inmate mothers are often targets of scorn and derision for the hurt that their prison sentence is seen to inflict on their children. Their experience of scorn is galvanised by the male-constructed prison environment or institutional ecology; and the provision of mutual family support is often severely obstructed by the mode of containment of inmates in sites which may be geographically isolated from the inmates' homes and from their families. For both the inmate mothers whose children reside with them in custody (where this is permitted, that is, in Queensland and Victoria) and for the inmate mothers who are separated from their children, their access to home, family and friends is via the institutional ecology of the prison and the prison system which controls it. Their physical movement, their telephone access and their correspondence and the nature and frequency of their family visits or home leave are determined by the prison system and implemented within the institutional ecology of the individual prison.

<div align="center">Changing profile of Australian female inmates</div>

It is known from studies of female inmate populations in the United States (Burkhardt, 1973; Dobash, Dobash & Gutteridge, 1986; Pollock-Byrne, 1990) and the United Kingdom (Carlen, 1990; Catan, 1989) that women prisoners are still characteristically young and, in the main, mothers of dependent children. The Australian female criminal is also generally young, has had a higher rate of employment prior to arrest than men, generally lacks any skilled job experience and is usually the mother of dependent children (Easteal, 1992). This profile of the young inmate mother was

confirmed in both the 1990 study of Queensland Combined Community Agencies Report and the 1993 New South Wales Women's Action Plan which found, respectively, that at least 85 per cent of Queensland's female inmates and over 85 per cent of New South Wales female inmates were mothers of dependent children. According to Australian Institute of Criminology researcher, Patricia Easteal (1992), the female inmate, in many cases, also carries the scars of prior abuse, both as a child and as an adult.

Wynne-Hughes (1988) noted that Australian women inmates of the 1980's were much more serious offenders than those of a decade earlier, with women now being convicted of homicide, assault, robbery or drug trafficking, making up nearly half of the female prisoner population. Easteal (1992) argues that this upward swing in Australia could be attributed to two primary factors: drugs and the changes in sentencing practices arising from mandatory minimum sentencing legislation of the late 1970's and early 1980's. Similarly, in the UK, the proportion of adult women convicted of indictable offences and sentenced to immediate imprisonment had risen from 3 percent in 1976 to 8 percent in 1987 (NACRO, 1989).

While the profile of Australian female inmates is changing, their relatively small numbers in relation to their male counterparts may account in part at least, for the limited research activity and ensuing literature on female incarceration in general, and on maternal incarceration in particular (See Figure 1 for the gender distribution in Australian prisons, 1982-1990).

Over fifteen years ago Lynn Sametz (1980), reflecting on the US corrections system, commented on the limited range of existing research literature on the experience of incarcerated mothers and the care of their children. This may be due, in part, to the fact that female inmates in general, and inmate mothers in particular, are a social group that is not easily identifiable nor mobilised. Authors such as Chesney-Lind and Rodriquez (1983), Hawkins and Alpert (1987), Henriques (1982) and Pollock-Byrne (1990), in critiquing female incarceration in the United States, have argued that a major dilemma facing correctional authorities is the small number of female inmates in relation to their male counterparts, which makes the provision of programs unviable in purely "economic" terms. While women still constitute a small minority of prisoners in Australia (5.1 percent of the total prisoners population in 1993), this represents an increase from 3.9 percent of the total prisoner population in 1983 (Biles, 1984). This steady increase is seen in Figure 2.

The relatively small yet growing number of female inmates combines with the fact that they cannot speak for themselves or take a strong self-advocacy role. Also, the mood of individualism which pervaded the 1970's and the lack of any systematic family policies may have caused the family needs of inmates to be overshadowed by the individual needs of inmates. Success tended to be measured negatively in terms of reductions in recidivism, not positively in terms of the degree to which offenders were reintegrated into society; nor have studies charted the impact of their experiences in the correctional system on their families. While there is still relatively less research literature on the female inmate, compared with work on male offenders (Biles, 1984), we can say that she is, in the Western world at least, becoming a more common phenomenon.

Given that the inmate mother is highly likely to be the primary caregiver for her children and not cohabiting with a male prior to her imprisonment (Baunach, 1985), she is usually the most significant person in the lives of her dependent children. Kinsey (1993) argues that her identity revolves around her maintenance of the relationship with her children; and the disruption of that relationship by incarceration is perceived as a loss of the relationship and ultimately, her loss of self. Similarly, LeFlore and Holston (1990) report that in studies of inmate and non-inmate mothers from similar socio-economic backgrounds, age and marital status, mothers from both groups concurred that their mothering role of providing for the social, physical and emotional needs of their children, seemed to them to be their primary role. The inmate's sense of reality as a mother is constructed within her first-hand experiences with her child (be they separated or together in custody) and her child's sense of reality is enacted within his or her first-hand experience with the mother. Former director of the Australian Institute of Family Studies, Don Edgar (1991: 8), sees families (despite their varying forms and sizes) as "reality constructing" institutions, that is, as sites where people such as children, mothers and grandmothers, build their own realities of the world. While the inmate mother and her dependent child, albeit with differing roles and needs, construct their own realities, this process is conducted within their shared relationship.

This paper is arguing for policies that recognise the distinctive role of the inmate female as mother; a role that she is seen to contravene by virtue of her incarceration. Her role does not necessarily eclipse that of the father nor of other family members, but is nevertheless distinctive due to the social and emotional value accorded it. This socially sanctioned maternal role exacerbates the dislocation experienced by the mother and her family.

More often than not the incarceration of a mother creates profound dislocation for herself and her family. Her incarceration means that her children may have not only lost their primary caregiver, but may have also been plucked from their own home during her arrest and imprisonment. In the face of this severe and often debilitating dislocation, she characteristically attracts scorn; scorn from society and scorn from the prison system and its personnel. This paper is arguing that instead of scorn, inmates need support; that is, support as women, as mothers and as family members, both from those inside the prison and from those outside the prison.

Inside-outside family support

As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the findings of the IMCIPE study confirm the importance of family support and of the maintenance of family ties for the rehabilitation of the inmate mother and for the welfare of her children.

The outside caregiver often faces financial strain in making visits to geographically distant prisons and maintaining telephone contact with the inmate. Furthermore, the inmate mother may also need to provide emotional support to the child's caregiver on the outside via family visits, telephone contact or letters. The provision of external support may also extend from support provided by close family and friends to support provided by professionals and volunteers with respect to parenting and educational programs which may assist the inmate mother in her parenting role and help the child to develop and learn. External support, therefore, has a dual focus, that is, the provision of practical and emotional support for the inmate mother and for her child or children. This support is essential for maintaining the mother-child relationship, for the inmate's rehabilitation and for the child's development.

The IMCIPE study found that one of the major sources of support from outside the prison system was found to be the inmate's family members or close friends, and among those 'significant others' maternal grandmothers were often the most significant others who cared for the children of their inmate daughters and who helped the inmate to cope with her role of prisoner-mother.

Grandmothers

The IMCIPE study found that while the mother was in custody, grandparents were usually the primary caregivers of her dependent children (See Table 3 for the primary caregivers of children whose mothers were in custody). Theirs was often the

role of outside caregivers for the children, escorts for the children to and from prison and emotional anchors for the inmate and her family. The support provided by grandmothers was borne out in the inmate and officer interviews across the three Australian systems (ie Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria). For example,

> *She's virtually put her life on hold for the time she's had him and she's put a lot of work into him. She has no problems with carting him around everywhere. I think too she feels that obviously, because she is the grandmother, I am her daughter, that there is the compassion there and she feels his pain. I am his only parent, otherwise he's got no one.*
>
> (Karmel, inmate mother, Tarrengower, VIC)

> *Mum and dad are doing their best with her. They love to have her. They'd keep her if they could. I'm the only daughter in the family, no boys. The mother-daughter relationship always becomes close when your daughter has a child.*
>
> (Kandice, inmate mother, Tarrengower, VIC)

> *My de facto is looking after him and he's got my mum up there on the central coast. That's why he's up there. Mum helps out with my son as much as possible. They've been a back-up to each other at the moment.*
>
> (Dina, inmate mother, Norma Parker, NSW)

> *Grandmothers are great people who look after the children and they usually given them more love than the mums.*
>
> (Julie, Prison Officer, Brisbane Women's, QLD)

> *Grannie, she's an interesting one. Because these grannies were often young mums and so busy doing young girl things when they were mothers and they actually take these kids on as their own because they are 34 and 35 as grandmothers. So they've got the maturity now to look after children that they didn't have in the beginning and you see them, and then the mother becomes the grandmother. A very interesting sociological phenomenon.*
>
> (Senior Policy Adviser, NSW)

Current policies for family support

Within the three Australian prison systems reviewed, each had some official family visits. There was, however, no financial assistance for families to visit and make telephone calls from the outside. The only practical support was an escort service provided by the community agency *Children of Prisoners* in New South Wales. This program provided voluntary escorts for the children to and from prison visits. Here was an example of government making policies, yet relying on community agencies to implement them. It is imperative, therefore, that governments provide, as a high

priority, practical and financial assistance so that the children and families of inmates can make prison visits.

For some women in the IMCIPE study, the lack of family support and the sense of scorn, even from family members, was reported as a source of deep hurt and intense pressure.

> *I just don't know why they don't come to see me. I reckon it's horrible not having visits. I don't really understand why. My father-in-law come up once for my son's birthday.*
>
> (Rani, inmate mother, Tarrengower, VIC)

> *When a women goes to prison, the husband pisses off somewhere else and the children go every which way. You're lucky if a man will stand by you for twelve months when you're in jail. I don't think there is a woman in this place that has a man who has stood by her past the twelve month mark. There is nothing to hold that family together. You have a fragmented family unit, the children go wild, everything collapses. But if the mother is there, there is a foundation. She can get by. She can give that support to them inside.*
>
> (Trixie, inmate mother, Helena Jones, QLD)

The gendered support or lack thereof raised by Trixie affirmed the need for policies which cater for interpersonal skills for those women whose self-esteem has been doubly hurt by the circumstances which led them to be in prison and the ensuing sense of abandonment by those they thought close. The definition of inmate women as bad girls, as gendered subjects, has in turn, led to gendered support, that is, support which is qualified by gender. The gendering of support was confirmed in an IMCIPE interview with the male governor of a Victorian prison whose professional experience with males and females inmates spanned two decades. He said,

> *The females tend not to have as many visits as the males in prison. The females are more devoted running after their men, than the men are doing it. But of course there are some dedicated dads. But I would say that every woman who has a child here has not got a husband.*

Some inmates in the IMCIPE study reported that their children's outside caregivers refused to tell the children that they were in custody.

> *Mum won't tell him I'm in jail. She's taking care of him permanently. She doesn't want him to know. He thinks I'm in hospital. Mum is coming up on the weekend but she won't bring him up. It makes it hard. I'd really tell him because he's going to find out anyway.*
>
> (Veronica, inmate mother, Brisbane Women's, QLD)

He wanted to know where I was and why I was in jail and things like that, but mum had been lying to him and saying I had been in hospital. I wasn't willing to do that. He was happy I told him.
<div align="right">(Sherrard, inmate mother, Norma Parker, NSW)</div>

Sometimes inmates themselves would not tell their children they were in custody and, in other instances, their children actually denied their mother's incarceration.

My son he tells his teachers I'm in Sydney. He can't do his homework and things like that. It's a country town where we come from. When I first come to jail, he told people I lived on a farm in Sydney.
<div align="right">(Deeb, inmate mother, Norma Parker, NSW)</div>

For many inmate mothers, visits were their lifeline to their children and these visits were contingent on a number of factors, such as the practical assistance of another adult, the agreement of the child's caregiver or a family law access agreement, available transport as well as finances for transport and/or accommodation. Yet for many families in the IMCIPE study, it was the initial access to a visit that was difficult. In Queensland and New South Wales, children under the age of eighteen must be accompanied by an adult, even if it is to visit their custodial parent. This means that the child must have access to a sympathetic and supportive adult who will escort them on visits. The IMCIPE investigations found that it was difficult for many children of prisoners who were in alternate or substitute care. Whatever their situation, visits were time-consuming and costly. Even if a child remained with a family member, there was no guarantee that the child's caregiver would maintain contact with the imprisoned parent. And as the next section explains, effective use of family visits was often precluded by the frequent geographic isolation of the prison from the families of inmate mothers.

Geographic isolation

There was ample evidence to suggest that many women were relatively geographically isolated from their families (See Table 4 for details of the geographic spread of inmates' homes from the prisons). The relative geographic isolation of the various prisons from the inmate's homes or homes where their children may be residing precluded many families from regular and sustained visits. Physical access was also hampered by poor access to appropriate transport. For example, while each prison in the study was serviced by some form of public transport, most prisons were a long walking

distance from the train or bus station; making the walk from the station to the prison an extremely arduous task for a grandmother with a baby or toddler.

The high cost of public transport and car travel was also prohibitive for many families of inmates. The difficulties families faced in actually getting to and from the prison were clearly seen in the IMCIPE interviews. For example,

> *The problem that I've got is distance. My kids take two and a half hours to get here on the weekend. But I worry about the car because I've got another 7 years.*
>
> (Rhana, inmate mother, Fairlea, VIC)

> *This year my brother's been driving Mum down, but because the car takes a lot of petrol, they haven't been coming as much. It takes a lot of money by public transport with the kids as well. It was costing her about $50 a weekend to come down with the kids.*
>
> (Suzette, inmate mother, Norma Parker, NSW))

> *Travelling to visits that far is very tiring for her. To get here by nine in the morning she's got to get the train at six which means getting up at four. That's hard on an eleven year old and it's freezing.*
>
> (Myra, inmate mother, Fairlea, VIC)

Unlike the English system, none of the three Australian systems in the IMCIPE study had subsidised reduced travel fares for the families of inmates to visit. The only exception was the travel concession to be provided by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Service and at the time of data collection, the service was still drafting its operational strategies. However, it appeared to be a most humane attempt to respond to the family needs of ATSI inmates and their children.

The fewer number of female prisons relative to male prisons in Australia raises the issue of gender equity, involving a more equitable geographic spread of female prisons for the sake of proximity to prisoners' homes. This does not negate or diminish the importance of family visits for inmate fathers, but seeks to ameliorate the effects of years of neglect in the area of family visits for inmate mothers. This evidence on family visits points to the need for a greater understanding of visits and external support as a right, rather than as a privilege for the inmate mother.

Policy implications

In order to ameliorate the effects of institutional resistance to meeting the needs of inmate mothers, correctional policy-makers and staff within the institutional ecology

of the prison need to develop and implement policies which actively respond to the familial needs of inmates. Such policies are needed for inmate mothers, who are condemned not only for their criminal offences, but also for their offences against their maternal role.

Given the importance of maintaining family relationships in the face of adverse prison environments and rules, geographic isolation of families and family dislocation, correctional authorities need to put in place family-friendly policies. Firstly, there needs to be, at a systems and at a prison level, a major dismantling of the overarching philosophy and modes of containment which regulate the lives of women and their families. Current prison polices are antithetical to the needs of inmate mothers and their families and fail to provide adequate opportunities for the maintenance of family ties. Secondly, there needs to be policy reform which allows opportunities for home detention or community service in order to maintain family ties. Thirdly, there needs to be practical support for the inmate mother within and outside the prison; especially financial support for grandparents and outside caregivers to make visits to distant prisons.

In sum, there is a need for policies which recognise the dislocation that incarceration brings to the family. Rather than practices of scorn, we need policies which support the inmate mother and her family.

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Table 1: Schedule of research program

Year	Phase	Task	Site	Prison system
1992	1	(i) Review of research literature (ii) Formulation of preliminary theoretical framework from a. research review b. previous professional experience (iii) Preliminary prison interviews and observations (iv) Formulation of preliminary theoretical framework and hypotheses	University of Queensland Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre Helena Jones Community Corrections Centre, Brisbane	Queensland
1993	2	(i) Policy analysis (ii) Prison interviews (iii) Prison observations	HMP Headquarters, London HMP Holloway, London HMP Styal, Cheshire HMP Askham Grange, York	United Kingdom
1994	3	(i) Policy analysis (ii) Prison questionnaire (iii) Prison interviews (iv) Prison observations	QLD Corrective Services Commission Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre Helena Jones Community Corrections Centre NSW Department of Corrective Services, Sydney Mulawa Correctional Centre, Sydney Norma Parker Correctional Centre, Parramatta Victorian Office of Corrections, Melbourne HMP Fairlea, Melbourne HMP Tarrengower, Maldon	Queensland New South Wales Victoria
1995	4	(i) analysis of findings (ii) preparation of recommendations to respective prison authorities	University of Queensland	

Table 2:   Facilities for mothers and babies

| Research site	Facilities for mothers and babies	Number of places available	Number of children
Holloway, UK	Mother & Baby Unit	14	6
Styal, UK	Mother & Baby Unit	15	6
Askham Grange, UK	Mother & Baby Unit	15	5
Brisbane Womens, QLD	Block for mothers and children	5	3
Helena Jones, QLD	Rooms for mothers and children	10	3
Mulawa NSW	Nil	0	0
Norma Parker, NSW	Nil	0	0
Fairlea, VIC	Family units	12	0
Tarrengower, VIC	Family units	12	5

Figure 1:   Gender distribution (number of men and women) in Australian prisons, 30
            June 1982-1990
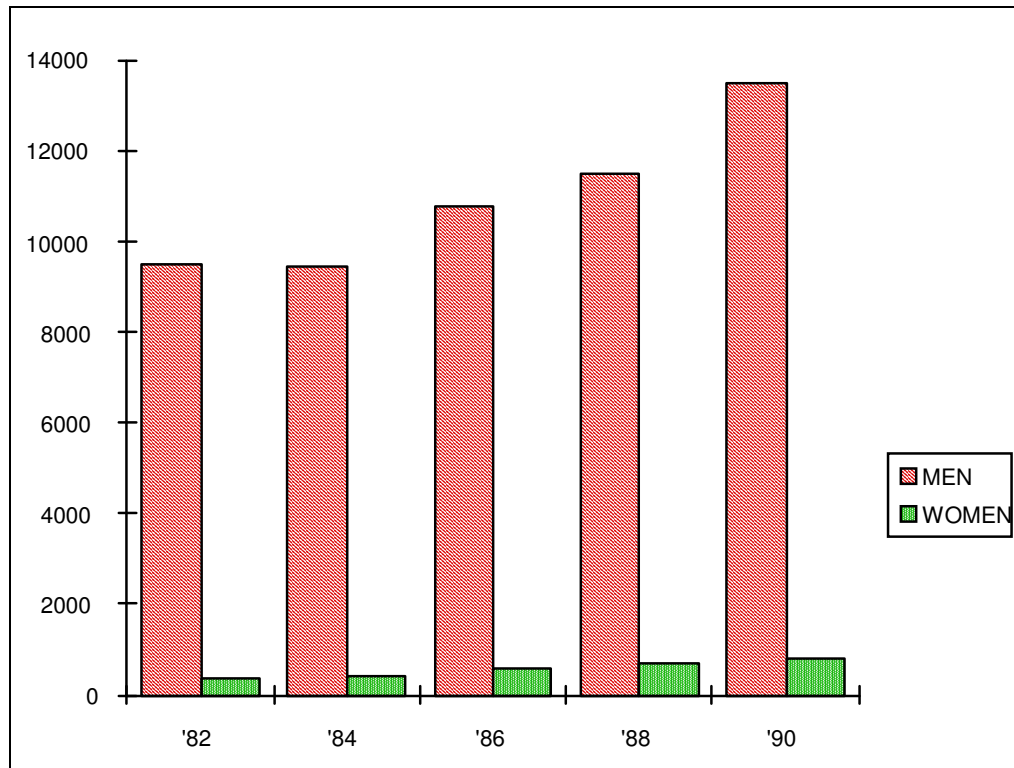
Source: 1991 National Prison Census data held at the Australian Institute
            of Criminology, Canberra.

Figure 2:   Number of female prisoners in Australia. Daily averages June 1976-
              1990

No. women inmates
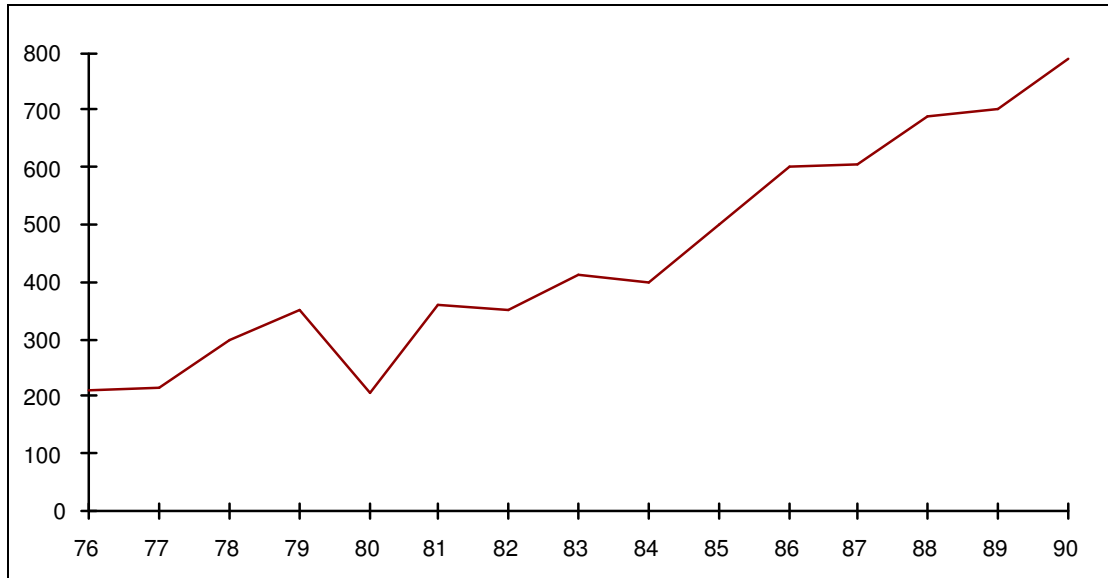
Source: 1991 National Prison Census, Australian Institute of Criminology,
             Canberra.

Table 3:   Primary caregivers of young children whose mothers were in custody (by percentage)

System	% Grandparents	% Partner	% Government agency
QLD	75	25	0
NSW	76	16	8
VIC	50	30	20

Source: IMCIPE Questionnaire and Interviews

Table 4:   Geographic spread of families IMCIPE inmates by percentage according to the distance (by hours) on public transport

System	> 1 hour	1-2 hours	2-8 hours	Interstate	Overseas
Queensland	10	25	40	15	10
New South Wales	60	7	25	8	0
Victoria	55	24	14	7	0

Source: IMCIPE Questionnaire and Interviews