



# Throughcare implementation in Australia

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## Background

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- Throughcare was adopted in context of rapidly increasing incarceration, reduction in social service provisions and harsher bail laws: risk
- Throughcare at different stages in each jurisdiction but the theory and ethos is similar and the commitment to throughcare is dominant: rationale to reduce reoffending

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## Background

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- Continuous assessment and assistance from first contact with the criminal justice system
- A unified, offender-centred and rehabilitative correctional service (UK)
- Holistic integrated management, including re-integration into the community. (NSW DCS Throughcare Strategic Plan); primary vehicle to reduce re-offending (Stevens2002)
- An integrated and seamless approach to remand, sentenced and offenders, from initial to final contact – Core business – SA

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## The survey

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- PACCOA members emailed with invitation to participate
- Aim: to explore the understanding and experience of and thoughts about throughcare policy from the point of view of Parole/Community Corrections staff.

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## The survey

- 53 responses included in this presentation
  - 80% from NSW
  - 10% from WA
  - 6% from Tas
  - 2% from Vic
  - 2% from NT
- years in service
  - 4% under 1 yr
  - 21% 1–5 yrs
  - 18% between 5 & 10
  - 57% over 10yrs

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## The results

- Rate understanding of throughcare
  - 8% poor – poorish
  - 37% average
  - 30% better than average
  - 25% excellent
  - Longer in service more likely say better–excellent
- enshrined in policy or legislation
  - 47% – yes
  - 32% – no
  - 21% don't know
  - Fairly evenly split amongst length, state, etc

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## Results

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- How well implemented
- Not at all                    11%
- Not well                      38%
- Could be better            32%
- Reasonably well          15%
- Very well                    4%
- All WA, Tas, NT & Vic rated could be better or below

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## Results

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- Barriers
- Lack of resources                    84%
- Insufficient community services    49%
- Working in partnerships            37%
- Lack of leadership                  33%
- Difficulty in maintaining client    24%
- Negative community attitudes      20%
- Well distributed across states, service length etc
- Other barriers all come up as themes

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## Results

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- Training
- Yes      49%
- No        51%

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## Themes – understanding the concept

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- The study clearly indicated a reasonable to excellent grasp of the concept of throughcare
  - Case-management and rehabilitation plans from first contact (court) through incarceration or community order to pre-release and post-release, including liaison with and referral to community agencies. Whole of sentence planning to support client settle successfully back in the community.
  - One sharp wit though quipped: we are through with you and we don't care

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## Themes – not new

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- Many in the service over 10 yrs commented on previous incarnation of throughcare:
  - “what longstanding parole officers have always tried to do”
  - Was changed ~15 years ago and “has never worked well since” because “prisoners and parole officers don’t connect until just before release”. Parole unit / community corrections unit in prison not adequate to ensure “continuity of care”
  - Current incarnation is ‘a brochure’, ‘a buzz word’

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## Themes – implementation

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- The overwhelming attention was on a large number of issues with implementation
- Some interstate differences

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## Themes – resources

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- Overwhelming difficulties in locating transitional and ongoing housing, chronic mental health services and employment and training support and services
- “Gov. needs to put more resources into community services and supports before throughcare can work”

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## Themes – building relations with community agencies

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- Liaison and links with community and human services is good/improving
- More contact with community services is beneficial
- More case conferences with NGOs
- BUT
- In many areas scant / inadequate community resources, “lack of housing & mental health services”


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## Themes – ‘good in theory but

- ‘Discussed as a concept, not how to do it’
- ‘Lack of a clear practice model’
- ‘The theory hasn’t reached the practical stage yet’
- ‘No agreed/proper definition of throughcare’ in action so ‘we don’t know when it’s being implemented’
- ‘Who knows, it’s still a model’
- ‘Remains rhetoric’
- ‘not enough substance’
- BUT
- Potentially could be / is when working well, more satisfying for clients and officers

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## Themes – lack of understanding/good relationships between CC & Custodial

- “Information sharing is non-existent”
- “Lack of joint case-management” / unwillingness to work together
- “Poor or no understanding by custodial of CC”  
AND
- Lack of goodwill “from district/community office towards prison parole units”
- Generally each feels the other is not well-disposed to their particular needs. Suspicion & frustration between sections. BUT
- Particular district offices feel better relations are developing

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## Themes – information

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- Access to custodial case notes poor – eg need access to programs clients have done, their literacy needs etc; “when don’t know what clients have done in prison don’t know what to follow up”
- Better detailed handover sessions & info
- Data bases “inadequate for throughcare needs”
- Confidentiality issues genuine but shouldn’t use as barrier to hide behind
- Need to know more about community resources

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## Themes – workloads & staff changes

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- “Workloads are too high to give the necessary attention to each client to ensure proper throughcare”
- “Increased administrative requirements are to the detriment of service provision”
- These may partly explain high staff turnover (no incentive to stay) thus inexperienced staff

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## Themes – staff training & issues

- Minimal / initial / no training
- “Links between reintegration and throughcare need to be included”
- Concern that the little throughcare there was in introductory training was “dismissed by the majority”
- Parole/CC officers feel not consulted or listened to by senior management

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## Some other broad issues

- Consistency – resources and liaison so variable
- Majority on short sentences and throughcare does not address these persons’ needs
- Need for “informed planning” that is based on information from clients, families, CC, custodial & services
- Service gaps – families and victims

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## Conclusion

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- High level of understanding & agreement with the aims of throughcare
- Many Parole & CC staff feel their knowledge and experience do not inform policy and implementation directives
- Corporate culture voices throughcare principles but does not commit the necessary resources to facilitate it. “culture not proactive on throughcare”

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## Conclusion

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- There is a strong need to break down the barriers between custodial and community: some areas seem to be achieving this to some extent
- Strong affirmation that Community Corrections is & should be focussed on the well-being and successful transition of the human beings involved in the service
- CC staff want to feel & experience a genuine investment and belief in this work.

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