

## Prisoners Forum Report Quarter 1 | January to March 2020

### 1. Meeting of members of the Prisoners Forum and announcement of new Chair

The Prisoners Forum met on 19 March 2020. Representatives of the following organisations participated in the meeting: the Aboriginal Legal Service, Community Legal Centres NSW, Community Restorative Centres NSW, Just Reinvest, Justice NSW, Just Connect, LawAccess, Legal Aid NSW, NSW Ombudsman, Revenue NSW and the Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC). In light of the emerging response to COVID-19, some organisations were unable to attend, and most who could attend did so remotely using the GoToMeeting platform.

The members of the Prisoners Forum formally accepted the resignation of Camilla Pandolfini of PIAC as Chair of the Prisoners Forum and endorsed the appointment of Nadine Miles of the Aboriginal Legal Service as the new Chair.

### 2. Review of Prisoners Forum Terms of Reference

The members discussed the Terms of Reference and agreed that the Prisoners Forum should continue to meet quarterly in pursuing its objective of providing “a platform for organisations in the justice sector to work together in a cooperative and collaborative manner to address access to justice and legal needs of prisoners in NSW”. The members endorsed the significant role the Prisoners Forum plays in sharing information across the sector and also agreed that the objectives should be refined to include: addressing the needs of those transitioning out of prison; addressing the process of re-integration on release from prison; and addressing the needs of the remand population.

It was agreed that the Terms of Reference would be revised and amended, and those amendments will be tabled for discussion and consideration at the next meeting.

### 3. Report and closure of the Prisoners and Identification Subcommittee

The members formally accepted the closure of the **Prisoners and Identification Subcommittee**, which was chaired by Julianne Evans of Revenue NSW. The recommendations contained in the final report issued in November 2019 were accepted by members at this meeting.

The members agreed to continue to work with representatives of Corrective Services NSW in order to finalise the draft flyer and postcard containing information for prisoners on release. The members also agreed to take responsibility for communicating the opportunity for free 3000 birth certificates for prisoners, an initiative that resulted from the work of the Prisoners and Identification Subcommittee. Julianne Evans informed the members that meetings have taken place with representatives of Births Deaths and Marriages and Corrective Services NSW and that steps were being taken to roll the initiative out. The members requested written confirmation of how this initiative will work, so that the details of the availability of the free birth certificates and

the relevant procedures can be communicated to the sector. Once that information becomes available, it will be shared out of session.

#### **4. The impact of the response to COVID-19 on prisoners**

Those present at the meeting discussed the particular challenges faced by prisoners as the response to COVID-19 evolves. There will be an even greater need for ongoing communication about the health and rights of prisoners and members agreed to share such information through the Prisoners Forum member list.

#### **5. Next meeting**

The next meeting of the Prisoners Forum is on **Thursday 21 May 2020, from 9:30am to 11am.**

Camilla Pandolfini

**Outgoing Chair, Prisoners Forum**

March 2020