



Miranda Matters

A PROJECT OF THE COMMUNITY RESTORATIVE CENTRE.

February 2016

The Miranda Project is an initiative of the Corrective Services NSW Women's Advisory Council (WAC) and a project of the Community Restorative Centre. The primary aim of the Project is to reduce the numbers of women in prison through the establishment of a holistic inclusive support service. The service will assist women to desist from offending, function as a diversionary program and provide post-release support for those returning to the community.

Modelled on women's centres in the UK that have been evaluated and found to have remarkably positive impacts on women's lives, the Miranda Project is a first for NSW and Australia. Holistic, inclusive and with a particular focus on women at risk, the service aims to assist women to remain out of custody, in the community and with their families.

The funding to get started

The concept of the Miranda Project was discussed and supported by government, research institutes, legal entities and practitioners. Funding to scope the project was provided by Ann Symonds AM, past member of the NSW Legislative Council, past chair CSNSW Women's Advisory Council, current patron SHINE For Kids and CSNSW Mothers and Children's Program. Further funding for initial employment project staff was provided by The Hon Elizabeth Evatt AC.

Meet the project Leaders

In July 2015, two project leaders commenced employment through the Community Restorative Centre (CRC). Project Director, Deirdre Hyslop, on long service leave from the Corrective Services NSW and Project Manager, Megan Etheridge OAM, Founder and Patron Dress for Success Sydney, have been working on a part-time basis, establishing partnerships to trial and further develop the model and related activities.

Facts and Figures

- Over the period 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015, a total of 1861 women were released from custody. Of these, 93% had served 12 months or less.
- 39% were Aboriginal women.
- 70% of the women released had served prior episodes in incarceration.

The Program takes shape

The Miranda Program is the core of the project. The purpose-built program will be piloted at five sites across NSW in the first half of 2016. These are Penrith, Leichhardt and Central West (Bathurst) and Waminda (Nowra) Women's Health Centres and Lou's Place (Kings Cross).

Development of the Miranda Program and staff training package commenced in February 2016 with a new member of staff employed for the purpose. Sarah Howard has extensive experience in program development and delivery with the equivalent client group as well as staff training. A funding application was submitted in February 2016 for a program implementer to facilitate incorporation of the Miranda Program into their suite of services and to evaluate its outcomes.

The program addresses needs of women at risk of engagement or already in the criminal justice system. Existing centres, such as the pilot sites, already provide some services and support that match elements in the program. The Miranda Program package will provide comprehensive resources to identify and fill the gaps. Following

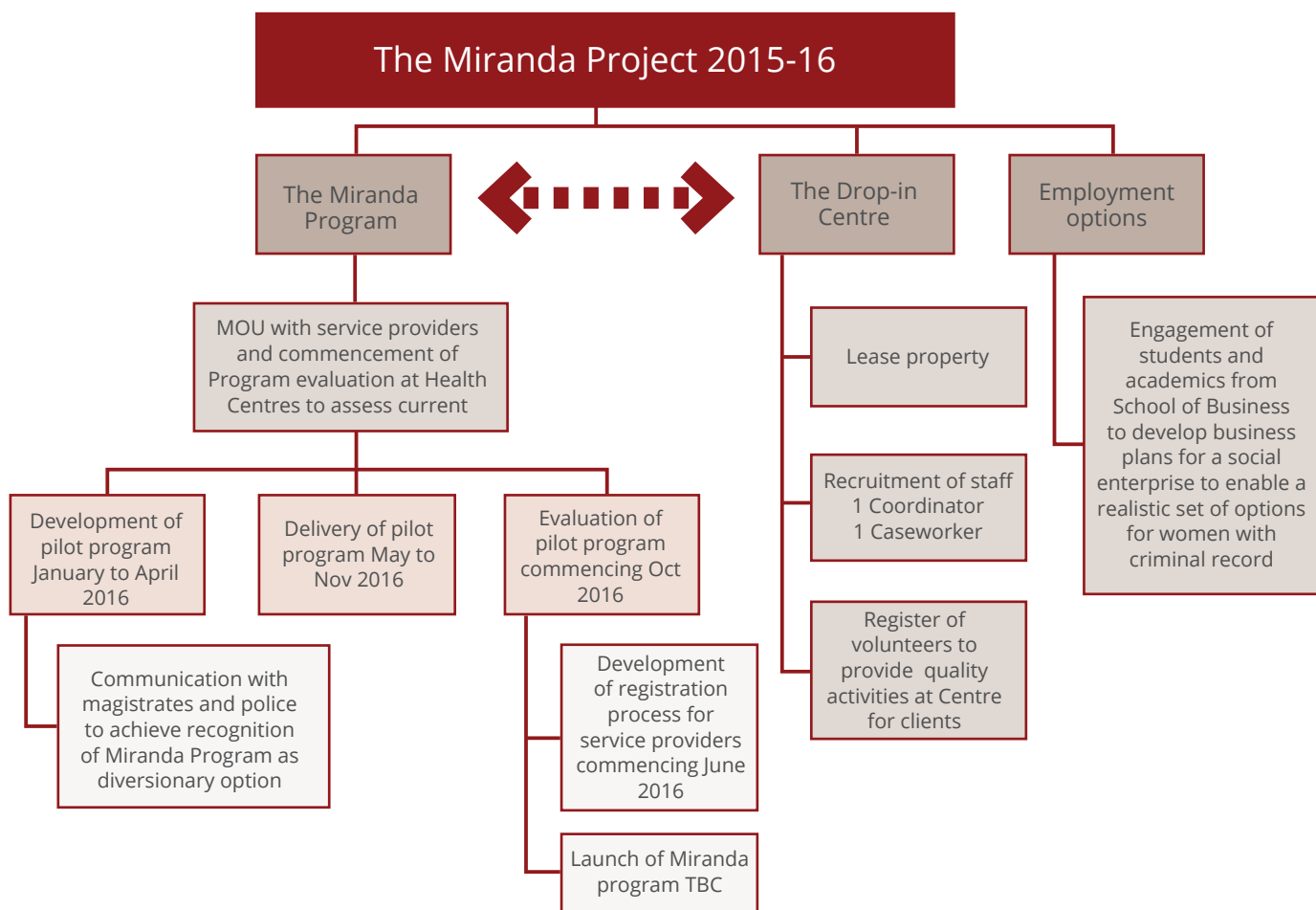
training, centres will become licensed Miranda Program providers. Locations of the licensed centres will be available on the net and through other communication channels to police, magistrates, Community Corrections and other bodies.

The other two pillars of the project are the Miranda Project Drop-in Centre and an employment service.

The project has a target to secure funding to enable the opening of a Drop-in Centre. This would serve to model the concept of the holistic service, enable co-location of other services and function as a coordination hub for capacity-building services state-wide.

Employment is an acknowledged need among the women for whom the Miranda Program aims to assist. Innovative approaches to employment and employment options are currently being explored through a collaboration with the Business School at the University of Sydney.

The Project Model



Evaluation

A partnership has been established with UNSW for evaluation of the project.

The Miranda Project Advisory Group

An Advisory Group has been established for the project, with membership including current funders, UNSW, Women's Health NSW, Community Corrections, WIPAN, Social Ventures Australia, Mental Health Coordinating Council, Women's Advisory Council.