

Document Title: Preliminary Evaluation of the Implementation of the Problem Solving Training and Offence Behaviour Program in Community Corrections and Prisons across Victoria, Australia

Author(s): Terry Bartholomew, Tatiana Carvalho and Michelle James

Document No.: 208016

Date Received: December 2004

This paper appears in *Policing in Central and Eastern Europe: Dilemmas of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, edited by Gorazd Mesko, Milan Pagon, and Bojan Dobovsek, and published by the Faculty of Criminal Justice, University of Maribor, Slovenia.

This report has not been published by the U.S. Department of Justice. To provide better customer service, NCJRS has made this final report available electronically in addition to NCJRS Library hard-copy format.

Opinions and/or reference to any specific commercial products, processes, or services by trade name, trademark, manufacturer, or otherwise do not constitute or imply endorsement, recommendation, or favoring by the U.S. Government. Translation and editing were the responsibility of the source of the reports, and not of the U.S. Department of Justice, NCJRS, or any other affiliated bodies.

TERRY BARTHOLOMEW, TATIANA CARVALHO, MICHELLE JAMES

PRELIMINARY EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MCGUIRE'S PROBLEM SOLVING TRAINING AND OFFENCE BEHAVIOUR PROGRAM IN COMMUNITY CORRECTIONAL AND PRISON SETTINGS ACROSS VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA

This paper will outline the experiences of the Victorian correctional department with the implementation of James McGuire's (2000) Cognitive Skills Program in community corrections and prison sites throughout Victoria. This program was implemented in the context of an organisational restructuring within Corrections Victoria which signified a renewed commitment to implementing empirically-based offender rehabilitation programs with the aim of reducing recidivism rates in Victoria.

The results presented in this paper are based on evaluations conducted by the researchers on the implementation process in community corrections and prisons. Among a range of other concerns, two primary issues were identified: planning and preparation, and program integrity. It was found that insufficient time was allocated to prepare the correctional system for the implementation of the Cognitive Skills Program. Guidelines and standards for the delivery of the Program were not formally developed prior to implementation in community corrections, and this contributed to inappropriate referrals, inconsistent staff training, and organisational issues such as workload allowances for program facilitators. Program integrity was raised as a concern in community corrections and prisons, as the majority of facilitators reported not adhering to the Program Manual.

This paper underlines the importance of formulating clear and quantifiable guidelines regarding service delivery some time prior to the implementation of an offender rehabilitation program, this providing ample time for issues such as infrastructure, staff training, and culture change to be addressed.

INTRODUCTION

The development and implementation of effective offender rehabilitation programs can be considered one of the contemporary issues in criminal justice. Research has shown that providing offenders with offence-related and offence-specific programs that target characteristics associated with offending behaviour can decrease recidivism by as much as 10 to 12 per cent (Gendreau, 1996). Recently, the correctional system in the state of Victoria, Australia has focused on providing offenders with empirically-based offender rehabilitation programs, with the aim of reducing re-offending.

In July of 2003, the Victorian correctional system underwent major restructuring. The purpose of this organisational restructuring was to implement a system whereby the development, implementation and evaluation of offending-behaviour programs could be centrally co-ordinated by a unified department. Prior to 2003, the Victorian correctional system was comprised of: the Department of Justice, which consisted of the Office of the Correctional Services Commissioner (OCSC), two private prisons (Port Phillip Prison and Fulham Correctional Centre), and the public system (CORE – the

Public Correctional Enterprise). The Public Correctional Enterprise oversaw the four public prisons, as well as the various community correctional sites throughout Victoria. As a result of the above merger, *Corrections Victoria* emerged as the single department responsible for the public prisons and community corrections. Although the two private prisons do not fall under the jurisdiction of *Corrections Victoria*, the initiatives to be outlined in this paper have also been applied in the private sector.

As part of the focus on reducing recidivism, *Corrections Victoria* has introduced the *Corrections Long Term Management Strategy*. The stated aims of this scheme are to provide offenders with offence-related and offence-specific programs, targeting multiple criminogenic needs in order to facilitate an offender's reintegration into society. The *Long Term Management Strategy* also incorporates the *Reducing Re-Offending Framework*, which was developed in order to guide the development and implementation of offending behaviour programs, with the aim of decreasing recidivism rates in Victoria (Birgden & McLachlan, 2002).

The organisational restructuring, and the introduction of the *Reducing Re-Offending Framework*, have resulted in an unprecedented amount of resources being used for diversion and rehabilitation programs (Birgden & McLachlan, 2002). *Corrections Victoria* has proposed that the *Long Term Management Strategy* and the *Reducing Re-Offending Framework* will divert 600 people from prisons (against predicted trends) by 2005. It is further proposed that community corrections will contribute to the saving of 350 of these beds through offending behaviour programs. As a result, the *Reducing Re-Offending Framework* signifies a cultural shift for *Corrections Victoria*, as it represents the first time a system-wide approach has been utilised to target offending behaviour in Victoria.

The first program to be rolled-out as part of the *Reducing Re-Offending Framework* has been the *Problem Solving Training Offence Behaviour Program* (McGuire, 2000), also known as the *Cognitive Skills Program*. The *Cognitive Skills Program* (McGuire, 2000) was implemented in community corrections and prisons, including one of the private prisons, in April 2002. The offence-focused *Cognitive Skills Program* (McGuire, 2000) is the first of a number of offence-focused and offence-specific programs to be introduced as part of the *Reducing Re-Offending Framework*. Due to the psycho-educational nature of its content, *Corrections Victoria* has proposed to use the *Cognitive Skills Program* (McGuire, 2000) as a foundation program, for moderate-to-high risk offenders. In the prison system, it has been proposed that the *Cognitive Skills Program* (McGuire, 2000) be used as a pre-requisite for offence-specific programs (excluding sex offender programs), as it teaches offenders the necessary skills to effectively problem-solve (Birgden & McLachlan, 2002).

The *Cognitive Skills Program* (McGuire, 2000) is based on an extensive body of research that has found a link between deficits in social problem solving and offending (Blud & Travers, 2001; Bourke & Van Hasselt, 2001; McGuire, 2000; McGuire & Hatcher 2001; McMurrin, Fyffe, McCarthy, Duggan & Latham, 2001; Pearson, et al., 2002; Schippers, Märker & De Fuentes-Merillas, 2001). This research has found that persistent and recurrent offenders are generally lacking in the necessary skills to deal effectively with everyday problems.

The *Cognitive Skills Program* (McGuire, 2000) is a group-based intervention aimed at reducing re-offending through training in social problem solving skills. There are four central components to the *Cognitive Skills Program* (McGuire, 2000): problem solving, self-management, social interactions training, and values education. Consistent

with cognitive-behavioural approaches, the *Program* focuses specifically on the application of problem-solving techniques to the analysis of criminal events (McGuire & Hatcher, 2001). At its core, the *Program* aims to teach offenders how to identify and deal with everyday life problems. This is achieved by giving offenders the requisite skills to be able to identify problems, generate effective, pro-social solutions, and apply these solutions.

Modelling, class activities, and homework assignments are used to teach and reinforce new skills. Throughout the *Program*, participants are encouraged to transfer the strategies they learn to problems encountered in their daily lives. Although some authors have argued that the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs is diminished in prison settings (Antonowicz, & Ross, 1994, Bourke & Van Hasselt, 2001; Schippers, et al., 2001), in an effort to address this reality, the prison-based version of the *Program* involves a more extensive and rigorous dosage of the content.

The *Cognitive Skills Program* (McGuire, 2000) is suitable for all moderate-to-high risk offenders. Low risk offenders, and sex offenders are excluded on the basis that they do not show similar deficits in problem solving skills. Research has highlighted that teaching low risk, and sex offenders adaptive problem solving techniques may actually increase recidivism (Blud & Travers, 2001; Bourke & Van Hasselt, 2001; McGuire, 2000; McGuire & Hatcher 2001).

As part of the implementation process for the *Cognitive Skills Program* (McGuire, 2000), *Corrections Victoria* formulated a set of minimum standards, or performance indicators. These standards were largely based on the risk/ needs literature (Antonowicz & Ross, 1994; Bonta, 1996; Cann, Falshaw, Nugent & Friendship, 2003; Hollin, 2002; Howells & Day, 1999; Ogloff, 2002; Palmer, 1991; Pearson, Lipton, Clenland & Yee, 2002). Table 1 provides an outline of these standards.

Table 1. Corrections Victoria's minimum standards for the Cognitive Skills Program.

Minimum Standards	Description
Prisoner assessment and selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offenders are to consent to participate - Only offenders assessed as medium-to-high risk can participate - Offenders with cognitive deficits, literacy difficulties, non-English speaking backgrounds, with other special needs, or with sentences less than six months, cannot participate
Staff selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Program facilitators are to have appropriate qualifications (i.e. a degree in psychology, social work, or counselling) and be competent in delivering cognitive-behavioural interventions in group settings - All necessary resources and materials are to be provided to facilitators
Pre-Program specifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The purpose and aims of the Program are to be communicated to the offender prior to Program commencement
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adequate space for 12-14 individuals is to be made available to conduct interactive groups.
Program delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Program to be delivered by two facilitators - The Program is to be made up of 30, two-hour sessions - The Program Manual is to be adhered to - No less than eight, and no more than 12 offenders are to participate in groups
Staff training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consistent training is to be provided to all facilitators - Training is to include three days of content training, and two days of activity-based, experiential training.

Supervision	- Facilitators are to receive regular, clinical supervision from the senior psychologist at the prison or community corrections location.
Management Structure	- Delivery of the Program should occur in a flexible and location specific way

In order to evaluate the implementation of the *Program*, the researchers also utilised a set of guidelines proposed by Gendreau, Goggin and Smith (1999) for effective program implementation. Gendreau et al. (1999) have argued that, in order to maximise a program's effectiveness, a number of additional criteria to the risk/ needs principles need to be considered. These criteria focus on: organisational issues, staff, the change agent, and program factors. Table 2 provides a summary of the Gendreau et al. (1999) factors, and the corresponding *Corrections Victoria* minimum standards.

Table 2. Similarities between the guidelines proposed for effective program implementation and the minimum standards developed by Corrections Victoria.

Guidelines for effective program implementation (Gendreau et al., 2001)	Corrections Victoria minimum standards
Organisational Factors	- Staff Selection
- Importance of a flexible and de-centralised host agency.	- Management Structure
Program Factors	- Program delivery
- Need to implement a credible, cost-effective program that is congruent with organisational values.	
Change Agent	- Management Structure Standards
- Importance of a credible agent with detailed knowledge of institution and staff support.	
Staff Factors	- Staff Training and Supervision Standards
- Inclusion of trained and qualified staff.	- Staff Selection Standards

As can be seen in Table 2, there is some overlap between *Corrections Victoria's* minimum standards, and the implementation guidelines stipulated by Gendreau et al. (1999). Although Gendreau et al. (1999) do not specify thresholds by which to measure the implementation guidelines, where possible, these guidelines were employed by the current researchers as a framework for evaluating the implementation of the *Cognitive Skills Program* (McGuire, 2000).

The aim of the present paper is to provide information regarding *Corrections Victoria's* experience in implementing the *Cognitive Skills Program* (McGuire, 2000) in community corrections and prisons. As the *Cognitive Skills Program* (McGuire, 2000) was introduced during a period of organisational restructuring, the results and subsequent discussion presented below will provide some insight into the types of obstacles that were encountered in the context of this restructuring, and may inform other jurisdictions in their efforts with such undertakings.

METHOD

Data for the community corrections and prison process evaluation reports were collected via the same process. In both reports, *Corrections Victoria* senior management were initially interviewed to gather information regarding issues that had been encountered during the implementation of the *Program*. The questions asked of the *Corrections Victoria* management staff were based on the aforementioned minimum standards and the Gendreau et al. (1999) guidelines. These questions were open-ended

and delivered in a semi-structured interview, to allow respondents the freedom to mention any issues they saw as pertinent. Three *Corrections Victoria* senior management staff were interviewed for the community corrections evaluation, and four *Corrections Victoria* managerial staff were interviewed for the prison evaluation. All interviews were tape-recorded, and lasted approximately one hour.

Based on the information obtained from these interviews, and the minimum standards and implementation guidelines, a number of questions were formulated for the location managers and senior psychologists at community corrections locations, and programs managers and senior psychologists in prison sites. These interviews covered issues such as staff training, staff attitudes toward the *Program*, offender assessment and selection, and organisational factors that may have hindered or aided the implementation process. Each interview was tape-recorded and lasted approximately 30-60 minutes.

Finally, the information obtained from the first two stages of data collection informed the formulation of a number of questionnaires that were delivered to program delivery staff and other staff involved in the *Cognitive Skills Program* (McGuire, 2000). In community corrections locations, the questionnaires were delivered to program facilitators and co-facilitators, as well as staff involved in the referral of offenders. In prison sites, the questionnaires were delivered to facilitator staff, as well as prison support officers. Questionnaires for facilitator staff in both community corrections and prison sites covered the following areas: staff training, offender assessment and selection, program content (i.e. whether staff believed that the content of the *Program* was suited to an Australian audience), program integrity, monitoring and supervision, and organisational obstacles and enablers to the implementation of the *Program*. Staff involved in the referral of offenders were asked about the nature of the referral process (i.e. whether they thought the referral process was working efficiently), and the inclusion and exclusion criteria employed for the *Program*.

The questionnaires were given to *Corrections Victoria* staff for distribution. In community corrections, the questionnaires were delivered to program delivery staff and referrers by the program coordinators. In the prison sites, the questionnaires were distributed by the programs managers at each prison. Each questionnaire package also contained a plain language statement detailing the nature and purpose of the evaluation, and ensuring respondents that participation was voluntary and anonymous. Respondents completed the questionnaire in their own time, and returned the completed questionnaire to the program coordinators or programs managers in a sealed envelope. It was predicted that each questionnaire would take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Data were collated by members of the independent evaluation team.

RESULTS

Data obtained for the evaluation reports was based on the perceptions, ideas and opinions of individuals involved with the implementation and running of the *Cognitive Skills Program* (McGuire, 2000) in community corrections and prisons. As the purpose of the investigations was to evaluate the process-related issues that were encountered, qualitative analyses were deemed the most appropriate method to analyse the data. This paper will report on the trends that emerged from data, which elucidate stakeholders' opinions and experiences.

A total of 136 staff from all levels of the correctional system provided information for the two reports. Table 3 provides a breakdown of the respondents for the community corrections and prison evaluations.

Table 3. Summary of the number of respondents for the community corrections and prison evaluations.

Community Corrections		Prisons	
Corrections Victoria management	3	Corrections Victoria management	4
Location managers	11	Programs managers	5
Senior psychologists	4	Senior psychologists	5
Facilitators	23	Facilitators	13
Referrers	61	Prison support officers	7
Total	102	Total	34

Data obtained in both the community corrections and prison evaluations will be presented in this paper. Although similar issues were identified in the two evaluations, there were some differences which reflected the different correctional environments. Table 4 provides a summary of the issues that were identified in the community corrections and the prison evaluations.

Table 4. Summary table of issues encountered by community corrections and prison sites in the implementation of the Cognitive Skills Program.

Community Corrections	Prisons
Inappropriate referrals i.e. offenders not meeting the entry criteria.	Length of time that elapsed between facilitator training and program delivery.
Some facilitators reported not having undergone training to deliver the Cognitive Skills Program.	Perception among facilitators that prison support officers had not received sufficient training to play a meaningful role in Program.
Length of time that elapsed between facilitator training and program delivery.	Apparent confusion among prison support officers regarding the type of training they had received.
Deviations from the Program Manual.	Deviations from the Program Manual
Absence of an external monitoring system.	Absence of an external monitoring system.
Insufficient planning and preparation of the organisation prior to the Program being implemented.	
Perception that staff had not been given adequate workload allowances in order to prepare for each session.	
Perception that information was not adequately conveyed from Corrections Victoria to community corrections locations.	
Role of the community corrections officer in the Program was not clearly defined.	

As can be seen in Table 4, community corrections locations appear to have encountered a wider range of problems than prison sites. This may have been due to the fact that the *Program* was first implemented in community corrections, thereby allowing the prison system more time to prepare for the implementation process. It is important to reiterate that the *Cognitive Skills Program* (McGuire, 2000) was implemented as part of the *Reducing Re-Offending Framework*, which was in turn one initiative among a larger system-wide restructuring within the Victorian correctional system. Although staff at community corrections locations reported having encountered a number of issues, it can be argued that these issues were a result of a lack of preparation in the system for the new focus on structured, manualised offender programs. Prisons, on the other hand, have a history of implementing and running offence-focussed and offence-specific programs, and therefore would not have experienced the same level or type of 'infrastructure-related' issues encountered in community corrections.

The main issues identified by community corrections staff appear to have been a result of a lack of clear communication between *Corrections Victoria* and the individual community corrections locations. The apparent lack of communication was further compounded by the fact that the *Cognitive Skills Program* (McGuire, 2000) was implemented in the absence of formal guidelines and the minimum standards. For example, two *Corrections Victoria* managerial staff stated:

What happened in CCS is a program implementation plan was written up in the absence of standards and specifications, and there wasn't the organisational support for the Program that should have been set up.

There's always that split between people who buy new programs, and say what needs to be done, and the people who go about implementing it, and the communication back and forth. And that was a central problem in the start, not having proper feedback.

One area that appears to have been significantly affected by the absence of standards and specifications was referrals. Facilitators in community corrections reported having received inappropriate referrals, in the form of low risk offenders. When referrers were asked to identify the inclusion criteria for the *Program*, a number of idiosyncrasies were noted. Criteria such as: apparent cognitive skills deficits, offender availability to attend the *Program*, motivation, age, and offender insight into his/ her problems, were cited by referrers. However, cognitive skills deficits are not yet measured prior to program commencement, and motivation, age, availability and offender insight are not stated in the *Program* Manual as entry criteria. It appears that the absence of formal guidelines and standards has influenced staff awareness of the appropriate entry criteria. An example of the statements made by facilitators is presented below:

We have had occasions where lower risk offenders have been put through, have been mixed in with higher risk offenders. At times we're putting people through who are below the standard literacy level.

Another major issue to be identified by staff was training. *Corrections Victoria* stipulated that all staff were to receive training regarding the Reducing Re-Offending Framework and the role of offender rehabilitation programs in this new Initiative. *Corrections Victoria* management argued that this training would facilitate the cultural shift in community corrections. Further, facilitators were to undergo six days of content and activity-based, experiential training prior to delivering the *Program*.

The majority of community corrections staff stated that they had received the requisite training, with only three facilitators stating that they had not undergone any training at all. The amount of time which elapses between training and facilitating a program is also important to program integrity. In community corrections locations, facilitators reported that training had occurred on average a year and a half prior to the *Program* being implemented. In prisons, the amount of time between training and program delivery ranged from three months to two-and-a-half years. Below is an example of the comments made by community corrections facilitators:

Training was delivered some 12 months prior to my actual participation in a program. I would like to see a refresher course when there has been no delivery of the Program for 12 months.

In prison sites, the training received by prisoner support officers was raised as a concern. Prison Support Officers (PSOs) hold a tenuous position in the Victorian prison system, as their role in the *Cognitive Skills Program* (McGuire, 2000) has not been clearly defined. PSOs are uniformed officers who participate in the *Program* by engaging in group discussion and in some cases doing the warm-up exercises with

offenders. Theoretically, the role of the PSO is to provide a bridge between the rehabilitative and the prison environment, by providing reinforcement to prisoners in their daily prison life. A pilot evaluation by Bartholomew and Aurora (2002) found that prison officers were resistant to the idea of participating in the *Program*, however four of the five Victorian prisons now employ PSOs. PSOs undergo the *Setting the Scene* training, which provides information regarding the *Reducing Re-Offending Framework*, and an additional one-day training regarding ethical issues. There is currently no systematic training provided to PSOs on the theoretical underpinnings or aims of the *Cognitive Skills Program* (McGuire, 2000). As a result, program integrity may be being compromised as PSOs may not be adequately equipped to provide the reinforcement their role stipulates. The majority of prison facilitators stated that they did not feel that PSOs had received sufficient training to fulfil their stated role. The following is an example of the types of comments made:

No. There is still confusion as to what the PSO's assigned role is. Training has only been provided to the extent that the PSO is merely an observer in the group. However, just sitting in the group and not being made part of group activities creates a more distrustful attitude of the prisoners towards the PSOs, as they see him/ her as merely a spy, or there for security reasons.

A similar issue emerged in community corrections, regarding the role of the Probation/Community Corrections Officers (CCOs). At the moment, CCOs are employed as co-facilitators for the *Cognitive Skills Program* (McGuire, 2000), however *Corrections Victoria* management stated that there was no formal definition for the role of the CCOs. Below is an example of the types of comments made by *Corrections Victoria* managerial staff:

Currently the problem is that the role of the CCO has never been defined in the department. Are they program facilitators, are they case managers, the philosophy about the role of the CCOs, all of those issues have never been addressed.

Possibly as a result of the uncertainty regarding their role, a small minority of CCOs stated that they did not perceive program delivery to be part of their role in community corrections. These CCOs primarily stated that they had not been provided with sufficient workload allowances to participate in the *Program*. The following is an example of the types of comments made by these CCOs:

There is no allowance for time taken to organise programs or for facilitating them. In addition, this is an extra duty which is not attached to my job description.

The concerns raised by facilitators in community corrections and prisons regarding training and role definition may also compromise program integrity. Issues concerning program and treatment integrity were further highlighted when facilitators were asked whether they had deviated from the *Program Manual*. In both community corrections and prisons, the majority of facilitators reported having deviated from the Manual. The extent and gravity of these deviations are further exacerbated by the absence of an external monitoring system. Although facilitators in community corrections and prisons have regular clinical supervision with their respective senior psychologists, there is no external, independent monitoring of the *Program* at this time. Based on the information provided by facilitators, it appears that deviations from the Manual occurred primarily as a result of time constraints, or because content was perceived not suited to the offender/ prisoner groups (i.e. responsivity). The following are examples of the statements made by community corrections and prison facilitators:

Community corrections - At times there are topics that confuse the clients unnecessarily. In this case I have since changed delivery of that same topic in order for it to be more user-friendly.

Prisons - *Due to time constraints we sometime had to omit certain exercises, however, we always made sure we addressed the aims of each session. We selectively used the drama exercises depending on the responsivity of the group.*

The comments made by community corrections and prison facilitators highlight the difficulty that is encountered in balancing program integrity and responsivity. Although it is important to ensure that the program is delivered in a way that ensures the underlying principles are maintained, it is equally important that offenders/ prisoners are responsive to the content. Although the Manual for the *Cognitive Skills Program* (McGuire, 2000) does provide some flexibility in the examples and delivery-style of the content, there was a perception among some of the facilitators (in both community corrections and prisons) that the content was dry and sometimes too basic for the offenders/ prisoners. Below is an example of the types of comments made by facilitators:

Community corrections - *Personally I find the Cognitive Skills Program as it stands, quite tedious. Obviously the underlying logic is of value, but I believe the message could be delivered in a far more user-friendly manner.*

Prisons - *I think that a lot of the content is very basic for a lot of prisoners and the program is pretty boring.*

Finally, as was mentioned previously, there was a perception among community corrections staff that insufficient time had been given to plan and prepare for the implementation of the *Cognitive Skills Program* (McGuire, 2000) in community corrections. Problems were identified by location managers and facilitators regarding workload allowances for staff to prepare for sessions and deliver the *Program*. The following is an example of the types of comments made by location managers:

Caseloads should have been reduced during training and Program delivery times. There needs to be clarity around after hours pay, safety, and union issues. At the moment there is no acknowledgement of the whole Program, the required planning, preparation, reading, delivery, debriefing, and supervision.

However, it is important to again reiterate that the *Cognitive Skills Program* (McGuire, 2000) was implemented during a period of organisational restructuring for *Corrections Victoria*. Not only was the *Cognitive Skills Program* (McGuire, 2000) the first offence-focused program to be implemented as part of the new *Reducing Re-Offending* initiative, it was also implemented at a time when the Victorian correctional system was undergoing significant changes. Therefore, it is likely that these issues emerged as a result of the organisational restructuring, rather than being a reflection of *Corrections Victoria's* efficiency at implementing an offender program.

DISCUSSION

The results presented above highlighted the issues that emerged in community corrections and prison sites throughout Victoria with the implementation of the *Cognitive Skills Program* (McGuire, 2000). The *Cognitive Skills Program* (McGuire, 2000) was the first offence-focussed program to be introduced as part of *Corrections Victoria's* new *Reducing Re-Offending Framework*, which aims to reduce recidivism rates in Victoria by providing offenders/ prisoners with empirically based programs that target criminogenic needs/ risks. This framework is part of a broader approach aimed at reducing recidivism rates by providing offenders with a variety of initiatives which will be implemented and evaluated by a central and unified agency.

The main issues to be identified in this paper centred on planning and preparation, and program integrity. There was a perception among community corrections staff that insufficient time had been allocated to prepare for the implementation of the *Program*. The most prominent themes to emerge within this category related to insufficient workload allowances, problems with role definition, and the perception that *Corrections Victoria* had not provided sufficient information regarding the *Program* and the *Reducing Re-Offending Framework*. However, the *Cognitive Skills Program* (McGuire, 2000) was implemented at a time when the Victorian correctional system was undergoing major organisational restructuring, which may have affected the channels of communication and lines of accountability for the *Program*. Further, the suggested hierarchical structure of long-term offender behaviour programs signifies a cultural shift in Victorian community corrections, and this may have further exacerbated these concerns. The guidelines for effective implementation proposed by Gendreau et al. (1999) state that staff should be given the 'necessary' time, resources and feedback to 'effectively' run the program. Although Gendreau et al. (1999) do not provide thresholds to measure 'necessary time, resources, and feedback', it is apparent that community corrections staff did not perceive that they had been given sufficient time, resources or feedback.

The other major issue to emerge in this paper related to program integrity. Program delivery staff in community corrections and prisons stated that issues had been encountered with referrals, training, and deviations from the *Program Manual*. As was stated above, the *Cognitive Skills Program* (McGuire, 2000) was implemented in community corrections in the absence of formal guidelines and minimum standards. This may have affected staff knowledge regarding the entry criteria for the *Program*, thereby resulting in inappropriate referrals. Staff involved in the referral process in community corrections reported a number of entry criteria that were incongruent with the draft minimum standards proposed by *Corrections Victoria*, and the guidelines provided by McGuire (2000) in the *Program Manual*. This issue did not emerge in prison sites, as formal and clear guidelines were developed prior to the *Program* being implemented. This highlights the importance of developing clear and quantifiable guidelines prior to introducing an offender program.

The amount, nature, and timing of staff training also emerged as a potential threat to program integrity. Although the majority of facilitators across community corrections and prisons had received the requisite training, it was suggested that Prison Support Officers were not equipped to fulfil their role in the *Cognitive Skills Program* (McGuire, 2000). This issue was further exacerbated by the perception that PSOs did not have clearly defined roles. According to *Corrections Victoria*, the role of the PSO is to provide a bridge between the rehabilitative and the prison environments. However, the majority of prison facilitators felt that PSOs had not received sufficient training to fulfil these roles. This is an important issue, as PSOs are required to provide reinforcement to prisoners in their daily lives, and it appears that they may not have received the training necessary to ensure this continuity. This clearly compromises program integrity, as the level and type of reinforcement being provided is likely to vary depending on the knowledge and motivation of the individual PSOs.

Another important issue that emerged regarding training was the time that elapsed between training and actually facilitating a program for many staff. Facilitators in community corrections reported that, on average, one year had lapsed between training and program delivery. For prison facilitators, the amount of time between training and facilitating ranged from three months to two-and-a-half years. This becomes a concern for program integrity, as no 'refresher course' was available to reinforce the concepts of

the *Cognitive Skills Program*. Again, it can be argued that, due to the organisational restructuring, *Corrections Victoria* did not have the resources to address these issues when they first arose. However, it is important that the underlying principles of a program are reinforced to staff, especially when a significant amount of time has elapsed since the first exposure.

Deviations from the *Program Manual* were the final issue to be identified in relation to program integrity. The presence of, and adherence to, a *Program Manual* is considered one of the pivotal components of the risk/needs literature (Antonowicz & Ross, 1994; Bonta, 1996; Cann et al., 2003; Hollin, 2002; Howells & Day, 1999; Ogloff, 2002; Palmer, 1991; Pearson et al., 2002). However, responsiveness is an equally important, though somewhat contradictory, aspect of program integrity. Achieving a balance between program integrity and responsiveness is thus essential, in order to ensure that offenders/ prisoners are exposed to the therapeutic aspects of the *Program* in a way that is suited to their learning styles. Although it did not appear that facilitators compromised the theoretical underpinnings of the *Program* when deviations occurred, in the absence of an external monitoring system it is difficult to quantify the extent of the deviations. Based on the comments made by facilitators, it appears that, when deviations occurred, they were an attempt to make the *Program* material more responsive to the needs of the offenders/ prisoners in the groups.

In summary, the implementation of the *Cognitive Skills Program* (McGuire, 2000) in community corrections and prisons throughout Victoria highlights a number of issues that need to be considered when implementing such offender programs in existing correctional systems. The results highlight the importance of ensuring that the organisation that is implementing the program is adequately prepared for such an undertaking, and that this preparation is a multifaceted concern. Although the *Reducing Re-Offending Framework* requires a cultural shift in correctional policy in Victoria, it appears that the organisation could have benefited from more time to prepare staff at all levels for the implementation of the *Cognitive Skills Program* (McGuire, 2000). Providing staff with information regarding the role of the *Program* in the new initiative is essential if the program is to be integrated into the existing correctional culture. It is also important to formulate clear, quantifiable service delivery standards, and to ensure that all staff have access to these standards.

Although providing staff with relevant training is necessary, the amount of time that elapses between training and program delivery also needs to be considered. Correctional departments need to either ensure that staff receive refresher courses on the program being implemented, or that training is delivered close to the commencement of the program. Further, it is important for the agency implementing the program to ensure that staff understand the balance between program integrity and offender responsiveness. Staff need to understand that program integrity and responsiveness can both be achieved while adhering to a program manual.

The efforts of *Corrections Victoria* in the implementation of the *Cognitive Skills Program* (McGuire, 2000) emphasise one of the obstacles encountered in contemporary correctional policy. As the current correctional cycles across a range of jurisdictions continue to focus on rehabilitation, it is important to draw on, and learn from the experiences of the Victorian system. In Victoria, Australia, the implementation process of the *Cognitive Skills Program* (McGuire, 2000) has revealed that in the absence of clear, quantifiable guidelines, a host of other issues will follow.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr Terry Bartholomew is a Senior Lecturer in the 'Doctor of Forensic Psychology' program at Deakin University in Melbourne. Dr Bartholomew has published in legal, medical, psychological, criminological and social welfare contexts, and much of his more recent work involves program design, delivery and/or evaluation activities with youthful, violent and/or sexual offenders.

Tatiana Carvalho is a research officer in the School of Psychology at Deakin University. She works with Dr Bartholomew on a number of funded projects, and has co-authored government reports and academic papers with him.

Michelle James is a research officer in the School of Psychology at Deakin University. Alongside recent work with reintegrative programs for youth, she works on the evaluation project detailed in this paper.

REFERENCES

- Antonowicz, D.H., & Ross, R.R. (1994). Essential components of successful rehabilitation programs for offenders. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 38, 97-104.
- Andrews, D.A., Bonta, J., & Hodge, R.D. (1990). Classification for effective rehabilitation: Rediscovering Psychology. *Criminal Justice and Behaviour*, 17, 19-52.
- Andrews, D.A., Zinger, I., Hodge, R. D., Bonta, J., Gendreau, P. & Cullen, F. T. (1990). Does correctional treatment work? A clinically relevant and psychologically informed meta-analysis. *Criminology*, 28, 369-404.
- Bartholomew, T., & Aurora, M. (2002). An evaluation of the Victorian pilot of McGuire's Problem Solving Training Offence Behaviour Program in two correctional sites. Department of Justice: Victoria
- Birgden, A. (2002). Therapeutic jurisprudence and "good lives": A rehabilitation framework for corrections. *Australian Psychologist*, 37(3), 180 - 186.
- Birgden, A. & McLachlan, C. (2002). Reducing reoffending framework: Setting the scene. Office of the Correctional Services Commissioner. <http://www.justice.vic.gov.au>
- Bonta (1996). Risk-needs assessment and treatment. In A.T. Harland (ed). *Choosing Correctional Options that Work: Defining the Demand and Evaluating the Supply* (pp. 18-33). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Blud, L., & Travers, R. (2001). Interpersonal problem-solving skills training: A comparison of R&R and ETS. *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health*, 11, 251-261.
- Bourke, M.L., & Van Hasselt, V.B. (2001). Social problem-solving skills training for incarcerated offenders. A treatment manual. *Behaviour Modification*, 25(2), 163-188.
- Cann, J., Falshaw, L., Nugent, F., Friendship, C. (2003). *Understanding What Works: Accredited cognitive skills programmes for adult men and young offenders*. London: Home Office.
- Friendship, C., Blud, L., Erikson, M., Travers, R., & Thornton, D. (2003). Cognitive-behavioural treatment for imprisoned offenders: An evaluation of HM Prison Service's cognitive skills programmes. *Legal and Criminological Psychology*, 8, 103-114.
- Gendreau, P. (1996). Offender rehabilitation: What we know and what needs to be done. *Criminal Justice and Behaviour*, 23(1), 144-161.
- Gendreau, P., Goggin, C., & Smith, P. (1999). The forgotten issue in effective correctional treatment: Program implementation. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 43, 180-187
- Gendreau, P., Goggin, C., & Smith, P. (2001). Implementation guidelines for correctional programs in the "real world". In G.A. Bernfeld, D.P. Farrington, & A.W. Leschied (eds.). *Offender Rehabilitation in Practice* (pp. 247-268). Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- Hollin, C.R. (2002). An overview of offender rehabilitation: Something old, something borrowed, something new. *Australian Psychologist*, 37(3), 159-164.

- Howells, K., & Day, A. (1999). The rehabilitation of offenders: International perspectives applied to Australian correctional systems. *Australian Institute of Criminology*, 112.
- Martinson, R. (1974). "What works?" Questions and answers about prison reform. *The Public Interest*, 35, 22-54.
- McGuire, J. (2000). *Cognitive-behavioural approaches: An introduction to theory and research*. London: Home Office.
- McGuire, J., & Hatcher, R. (2001). Offence-Focused Problem Solving: Preliminary evaluation of a cognitive skills program. *Criminal Justice and Behaviour*, 28(5), 564-587.
- McGuire, J., Mason, T., & O'Kane, A. (2000). Effective interventions, service and policy implications. In J. McGuire, T. Mason & A. O'Kane (Eds.), *Behaviours, Crime and Legal Processes: A Guide for Forensic Practitioners*. (pp. 289-314). Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- McMurrin, M., Fyffe, S., McCarthy, L., Duggan, C., & Latham, A. (2001). 'Stop & Think!': Social problem-solving therapy with personality-disordered offenders. *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health*, 11, 273-285.
- Ogloff, J.R.P. (2002). Offender rehabilitation: From "Nothing Works" to 'What Next?' *Australian Psychologist*, 37(3), 245-252.
- Palmer, T. (1991). The rehabilitation/developmental perspective: Missing link in corrections. *Federal Probation*, 55(1), 55-65.
- Pearson, F.S., Lipton, D.S., Cleland, C.M., & Yee, D.S. (2002). The effects of behavioural/cognitive-behavioural programs on recidivism. *Crime and Delinquency*, 48(3), 476-496.
- Schippers, G.M., Märker, N., & De Fuentes-Merillas, L. (2001). Social skills training, pro-social behaviour, and aggressiveness in adult incarcerated offenders. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 45(2), 244-251.
- Serin, R. & Kennedy, S. (1997). Treatment readiness and responsivity: Contributing to effective correctional programming. Retrieved June 10, 2004, from <http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/rsrch/reports/r54/r54e.html>