



REVIEW OF THE ICPA VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

Submitted by the ICPA R&D Network
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The recent ICPA Virtual Conference successfully engaged more than 900 delegates from over 60 countries listening to some 70 workshop presentations and plenaries delivered to accommodate different time-zones!

A number of members of the ICPA R&D Network participated in the Conference and the following is a summary of some of their feedback. Included as well at the end is a much more detailed and informative review provided by a long-standing R&D Network member, Steve Pitts from the UK.

A Summary of Themes Emerging From The Conference

Innovation in Action

- The global correctional discussion seems to have moved from what '*should be happening*' to '*what is, or is going, to happen*'. The fact that real 'change' is occurring was evident across a number of correctional domains and around the world.
- The pandemic seems to have forced the hand of many jurisdictions to implement innovations that might otherwise have taken years to progress! Examples are the greater acceptance of community options and more awareness of the importance of supporting staff well-being!
- The Conference highlighted the innovative role & involvement of volunteers (one of the most powerful themes of the conference) ... with examples from Japan, Singapore, Canada, and the USA, including the impact of 'remote' approaches due to Covid19. There was emphasis on "seeing volunteers as a key part of the eco-system of support" and an important point that was discussed was that volunteers should not be treated as a 'free' resource. It is critically important to establish frameworks of support for volunteers including clarity of role, space, training, recognition ... etc. Also highlighted was the fact that volunteers can also offer support to staff.

A Focus on Increasing Cultural Competence:

- And especially in meeting the challenges of over-representation of indigenous people ... e.g., Australia, NZ, Canada.
- Future facilities should be more humanizing, and trauma focused, holistic, drawing on traditional practice, have a smaller footprint, and be connected to the communities where people reside. The principle of self-determination will be more to the fore: "Nothing about us without us".

Community Reintegration:

- The value of improved work in the community with diverse groups, including those at high risk of reoffending, indigenous populations, the elderly, the mentally ill and the intellectually disabled.
- (HONG KONG) attention to individual responsibility, to building “social capital”, and to engaging social resources including NGOs and community volunteers.
- (JAPAN) the importance of focusing on a *comprehensive continuum of care protocols and mechanisms*.

What Works ... and What Else Works ...

- With a renewed focus on measuring outcomes ... e.g., in NSW, a quite sophisticated model for measuring prison performance.
- But also, a focus on *What Else Works* ... as collaborative, creative and participatory processes that can lead to significant changes in delivery of prison services and ways to “engage the dis-engaged”.
 - The Twinning Project in the UK
 - Arts Project in Canada
 - Uganda PEN project restoring dignity through creative writing programs that used videos of prisoners reading their own poetry expressing “narratives of lived experience” ... referred to as a “pedagogy of hope”

And Some Other Content Themes Worth Mentioning ...

- A special session focused on prison challenges in Africa (including Kenya, Uganda, and Burkina Faso); including the challenges of upgrading overcrowded, inappropriate, colonial era prisons, decongestion, development of standards protecting human rights, operationalizing the principle of public equivalence in prison health etc.;
- Digital technology is changing the rehabilitative potential of prisons;
- Machine learning approaches to data analysis are providing new ways of understanding risk assessment;
- Structured therapeutic intervention approaches that preserve human dignity can be implemented as an alternative to counter-productive punitive segregation methods (e.g., North Carolina, Canada);
- Australian & NZ presentations on understanding gang affiliation and violence in prisons;
- The application, practice and impact of trauma informed intervention ... a powerful Distinguished Scholar Lecture delivered by Dr. Anna Motz, a psychotherapist working with violent women in the UK.

Members of the ICPA Executive Board participated as Moderators of many sessions. All in all, the Virtual Platform received rave reviews, allowing for more participation from all parts of the world and now extending a challenge for ICPA to balance ‘in person’ vs. ‘virtual’ modalities for sharing knowledge with the international corrections community. Is there room for both approaches?

The following are some reviews of the Conference provided by members of the ICPA R&D Network. Their unanimously positive reaction to the Conference is obvious.

Reviewed by Dr. Rohan Lulham, New South Wales

When you go to a professional or academic Conference you often go with aspirations around the work you are presenting and networks you would like to thicken around that work. You also often go to an academic or professional conference with prominent themes or issues in your current work and research. For me collaborative design processes around physical environments in the justice area are a major ongoing focus but emerging over the last couple of years is also trauma-informed practice, Indigenous over-representation, digital technology, and the social fabrics of correctional institutions. In these areas I really valued and learnt from the presentations.

For the first time in attending an ICPA conference I was not presenting at this conference. Time differences also meant that I often was not a live audience member but viewing the recording, so networking was less of an emphasis. It allowed more space to listen and take in the presentations – and along with the task of this short review – meant I attended more than I would otherwise. And it was such a productive experience. It also included learning a lot about what is happening across a range of topic areas in my own backyard - NSW Australia - often I would miss these presentations where there are multiple parallel streams. While not having made the connections yet, I also now have many people who inspired me and who I plan on connecting with in the future.

In considering those presentations I viewed as a whole, the overriding theme that distinguished this conference from other ICPA and similar conferences was that the narrative has moved from what *'should be happening'* to *'what is, or is going, to happen'*. Change is occurring and it was obvious across domains and continents. I'll briefly dot point some key insights and findings in this regard with some relevant presentation noted against each:

- Digital technology can and is changing the rehabilitative potential of prisons (Pang, Lam, PID058; Ditto, PID020; O,Hagan, PID087);
- Collaborative, creative and participatory processes can lead to changes in prison services, physical design and the mindsets of the prisoners, staff and community members involved in these processes (Martinovic, PID052; Gamman, Doruff, PID029);
- Machine learning and Bayesian approaches to data analysis are providing new understanding about the multiple factors affecting how prisons perform in terms of supporting desistance, safety and well-being. (Galouzis, PID081; Schmidt, Brabyn, Grace, PID035);
- Cultural practices, connection and addressing cultural safety for First Nations people creates rehabilitative change and is central to desistance – it is not a secondary consideration. (Grant, Lynch, Rameka, Lamont, Maltby; PID600; Bertsch, Morrison, PID075);
- How prison differ, and how staff within them view their roles, impacts on the outcomes achieved and the quality of the prison social environment (Kajander, PID001; Galouzis, PID081; Schmidt, Brabyn, Grace, PID035);
- Structured unit management approaches that preserve human dignity can be implemented as alternative to counter-productive punitive segregation methods (Hitchcock Gonzo, PID025; DuTemple, Mautz, Junker, PID009);
- The application, practice and impact of trauma informed practice in prisons (Motz, PID400).

Reviewed by Dr. Henry Pharo, South Australia

I thought that the conference committee did an excellent job of putting together a very engaging and informative agenda over the three days.

It was so motivating and exciting to hear about all of the great innovations that have emerged over the past 24 months. I noted a very consistent trend across many of the presentations: in spite of the challenges and frustrations that everyone has experienced as a result of the global pandemic – the show must go on! Correctional jurisdictions have been incredibly agile and resilient to continue to deliver critical custodial and rehabilitation services over the past two years. It was also really evident that the pandemic has actually forced the hand of many jurisdictions to implement innovations that might otherwise have taken years to progress!

In addition to the obvious theme of COVID-19, I noted a number of other important themes in the sessions I attended:

- Cultural competence: The issue of over-representation of indigenous people in the criminal justice system is sadly similar across many countries – there is such a clear need for correctional systems to foster culturally safe and responsive environments. It was very interesting to be able to hear about some of the initiatives being implemented around the world – I particularly noted a very strong commitment from many jurisdictions to establish partnerships between corrections and cultural representatives/organisations in the community.
- Community Reintegration: There was a strong focus on the need for correctional services to be supporting people when they are released from prison and return to their community. I attended some great presentations that spoke to the need for employment support post-release, mental health and addiction services, an intensive engagement model for people subject to intensive community supervision, and I was truly inspired by the presentations from Singapore regarding the Yellow Ribbon program – it was so impressive to hear about how that program supports people to re-connect with their community after imprisonment, while at the same time advocating for the needs of people in the justice system and challenging the community to accept these people back into society.
- What (still) works – There is an ongoing need for correctional services to evaluate and gather evidence regarding the efficacy of the work that we do. It was very encouraging to see such a strong focus throughout the three days on evidence-based practice and gathering data to measure the outcomes of the work that correctional agencies are doing to reduce reoffending and to protect the public.

Finally, I just wanted to emphasise the fact that ICPA truly is a global community of practitioners – this was as evident this year as it is at any other time (despite the fact that everyone was attending virtually). As I noted earlier, I'd like to extend my thanks to ICPA for organising this event, congratulations to all of those people who were involved in the planning of the virtual conference – it was a great success!

Reviewed by Dr. Melissa Hamilton, United Kingdom

Overall, as an audience member I would judge the conference as successful. The presentations I observed generally did a good job of using the virtual format. The use of a consistent opening slide of graphics and audio was a good option as it made the program appear more cohesive rather than simply a disparate set of lectures. I appreciated the platform offering the ability to save in advance topics of interest so that I would not have to revisit all of the selections every day.

The gist was that researchers and prison officials continue to innovate with interest in improving the lives of prisoners instead of a focus on simply housing human beings. There were appropriate reflections on what was learned during Covid.

Some examples of specific presentation experiences are these.

- In *Together We Walk Further: The Rehabilitation Journey of Persons with High Sex Re-offending Risk*, the presenters did an admirable job of making the PowerPoint slides visually appealing and they did not simply read the slide text. In addition, they highlighted a specific case study of Ben, which really made the unique nature and success of their program resonate.
- *A Recidivism and Cost- Benefit Analysis of the South Australian Violence Prevention Program* provided a fine example of balancing the academic methodology of a study with concrete rehabilitative outcomes for a varied audience.
- The presenters in *Violence is Currency: Understanding Gang Violence in Prison* exhibited a well-thought out international collaboration. Their subject was informative and was discussed in a way that provided insights into how results may generalize outside the context of the specific prison in which the study was performed.
- The talk on *Prison Violence and the Social Environment – a New Zealand Case Study* was a contrast to others where each slide contained too much text and data and thus was visually difficult to grasp. The subject remained of interest, though.

I would hope that in the future, even when in-person conferences return, there might remain a virtual option. The advantages are a reduction in travel costs, the ability to view presentations either again or anew with recordings, the opportunity to stop and play back parts for a better understanding of the material, and the ability to enjoy presentations that otherwise are delivered simultaneously.

Reviewed by Dr. Willem Luyt, South Africa

I have indeed linked into some presentations. I think the conference was more accessible than ever before because of the format. It can now be marketed wider than in the past due to the accessibility. The variety of topics sometimes made it difficult to select which session you want to attend (but that is a good thing, as it included a wide range of potential audiences).

You may be aware that South Africa has load shedding, where the power supply is interrupted periodically. When this occurs, there is no connectivity. This has happened over the run of the conference and prevented more participation (it is an inconvenient nuisance).

My opinion is that this format can grow from strength to strength, although I really miss the interaction.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity.

Reviewed by Dr. Tina Maschi, United States

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a review of the ICPA 2021 virtual conference, Sharing Knowledge and Making Connections in Corrections. I was not able to attend the event live but was able to review the post-event material. Overall, I found the conference theme and presentations featured at the event to be quite vibrant and exciting. Please note, that is something that many correctional attendees would not

often describe about events. The positive and uplifting approach was excellent, drawing in the kinds of presentations and presenters that can help educate and enlighten the global correctional community who has been mired in the thick of the cycle of fear, crises, despair, stress, violence, etc... often associated with criminal justice and corrections. Also excellent was addressing issues to do with COVID-19 as this crisis goes beyond corrections to the general community (in which we are all in a metaphorical prison lockdown of sorts). So, lessons learned can also be applicable to the community. Kudos to the conference planning team.

A particular stand out presentation was the Expert Panel Discussion: *Covid - Managing the Challenges of our Changing Reality (PID500)*. It consisted of global correctional leaders, ex-ICPA board members of which all of them have been dealing directly with the COVID crisis in corrections. It was very moving to hear about their views and experiences overcoming these challenges. In fact, it was inspirational and clearly showed the humanity that is often overlooked to those committed to helping within corrections. As an artist and arts fan, I also appreciated the art-justice program and glad that message is getting out. Also, the program addressed issues of diversity and I am glad indigenous people and their plight was addressed. All of the other presentations also seemed important regarding topics such as correctional furniture design, making connections, prison security issues, etc. ... Again, thank you for the opportunity to review the program. I look forward to next year's conference.

Review and Reflections on the ICPA Virtual Conference 2021

by Steve Pitts, Consultant in Community-Based Justice, United Kingdom

The Conference took place against the background of Covid 19. Whilst not specifically addressed in this review, I note the significance and impact of Covid 19, including on offender and staff well-being. There is also potential for at least some good to result. As suggested in the opening session "Managing the Challenges of our Changing Reality" the public are now more aware of prisons including the "hidden work" of staff, of overcrowding, and perhaps also becoming more accepting of community corrections.

I reflect here on participation in Conference events focussed mainly on community corrections, including also prison-based work involving significant community elements, or engagement and work with community stakeholders and services.

I also refer to other events which, whilst mainly prison-orientated, communicated lessons relevant to community provision or were simply interesting!

Sessions and Topics:

Several topics in my view stood out, reflecting content strength and impact. I comment first on work with one specific group - offenders who have committed serious (violent and/or sexual) offences. Important elements of the Hong Kong rehabilitative approach include responsiveness, building social capital, and strong connections with community organisations and volunteers. Taking the volunteer cue, I then look at approaches to work with volunteers (in my view one of the most powerful themes of the conference) in

Japan, Singapore, Canada, and the USA, briefly including the impact of “remote” approaches due to Covid19.

Returning then to other specific groups, sessions describing work with indigenous populations in Australia, New Zealand and Canada, and people with mental health needs in Japan again illustrate the importance of responsivity, systematic prison to community work, and strong user and community engagement. I also include a session on the reorganisation of probation provision in England and Wales known as “Transforming Rehabilitation” (it concerns the service where I began my career) and the subsequent return to a unified service. Does this experience provide any insight into approaches to reducing reoffending? Was there a lesson? If so, was it the expected one? I conclude with a brief account of the Pen project, a Ugandan account of the power of creative arts.

Themes:

Themes will be evident from the forgoing session and topic descriptions, most clearly the importance of and attention given to responsivity, and to community engagement and involvement. Most themes are informed by more than one event and are highlighted in reflections following each session description. Together these themes highlight some of the challenges and opportunities common to probation and parole services around the world striving to support reintegration and desistance from reoffending.

Highlighted themes include -

- The value of improved work in the community with specific and diverse groups, including those at high risk of reoffending or harm, and indigenous populations, through -
 - better understanding and application of the principle of responsivity
 - co-production, and close-to-community service development and delivery
 - improved attention to social capital, trauma, and healing
 - community engagement and involvement including of NGOs and volunteers
- Systematic prison to community integration of services, and engagement of community services
- Impact of the organisation on its staff and ultimately on reoffending
- The power of arts in identity, moving on, building stronger relations with staff, and engaging communities

1) Effective work in the community with higher risk individuals – responsivity, social capital, and partnership

Together we work further: The Rehabilitation Journey of Persons with High Sex Re-offending Risk.

This workshop was presented by Backy Tong and Jim Cheung of the Hong Kong Correctional Services. It described the work of the “Evaluation and Treatment Unit” (ETU), the first residential treatment unit for people with sex offending behaviours in Asia. Receiving residents with a high risk of recidivism (3-5 times higher than the average) the ETU has developed and tested a model of intervention that raises hope for long-term rehabilitation.

Presenting a case study of “Ben” who had a history of multiple psychiatric disorder, poor interpersonal relationships, poor academic and work performance, and repeated sex offences, they postulate how the

early period following release is critical to desistance. The model incorporates RNR assessment and psychological programmes. However, I was struck by the emphasis on behavioural and GLM rather than cognitive approaches (a response to Ben's low IQ) and the strong focus on community social resources including to address loneliness, appropriate relations with girls, and employment.

The model is based on work by Adam Carter and Ruth Mann (*Organising Principles for an Integrated Model of Change for the Treatment of Sexual Offending*, 2016) which proposes a model of change and six organising principles, one of which is "Treatment will Strengthen Social Resources such as Social Capital". Incorporating CoSA arrangements, work with Ben included linkage with a partner NGO - Society of Rehabilitation and Crime Prevention – and even included accompanying Ben to work (to provide company and reduce risk of reoffending). With the aid of these and other social interventions Ben has stayed offence-free for 3 years. He has a stable job, satisfactory family relationships, a stable intimate relationship, and maintains wholesome hobbies. Furthermore, not only has he been assisted by a network of community volunteers, but he has also steadily developed a new community identity and become a volunteer himself.

Reflection: This session presented powerfully the possibility of working successfully to rehabilitate people in the community who present a high risk of reoffending. Central to the approach were attention to individual responsibility, to building "social capital", and to engaging social resources including in this case an NGO and community volunteers. (I note contemporary data from England and Wales revealing that more high risk of harm - sexual and other violent - offenders are supervised in the community on a multi-agency MAPPA (Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements) basis than the *total* number of people held in custody. Whilst both this session and MAPPA illustrate the successful community supervision of high-risk offenders through intensive arrangements involving partnerships, differences between an emphasis and "language" of public protection on one hand and rehabilitation on the other appear striking).

2) The contribution of Volunteers in Corrections

The case study presented by the Hong Kong Correctional Services leads neatly into the two main sessions on volunteers in corrections.

Japan: The Japanese experience was presented by Mr. Satoshi Minoura of the Rehabilitation Bureau (Probation Department of the MoJ) who spoke about the universal value of community volunteers supporting offender reintegration.

Volunteers in the Japanese system (translated in English as VPOs – Volunteer Probation Officers – and in Japanese as Hogoshi) are numerous, outnumbering professional probation officers by several fold. The latter manage the work of VPOs and supervise higher risk offenders directly. The core value of volunteers in Japan includes their contribution to public understanding, and of course, their relationship with offenders. Volunteers advise, assist, and befriend offenders (as a former probation officer in England and Wales I inevitably make the link with this same widely understood and respected summary of the role when I joined the service a few decades back!) and help to bridge gaps between offenders and communities. The presentation described how volunteers "stand side by side" with offenders, as good neighbours, in their own communities, drawing on their personal knowledge and networks to help to "heal the wounds" that lead to offending.

In organisational terms it is important to establish systems for volunteers including clarity of role, recording work, training, and support.

The presentation concluded by highlighting “Hogoshi Day” - an official day of the United Nations following the 14th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, held in Kyoto 2021, and the first World Congress on Community Volunteers in work with offenders held during the same event. The clear hope is that increased focus on volunteers and their role will help to build an inclusive society where no one is left behind.

Singapore: Valerie Chiang presented on Community Partnerships to Support Offender Reintegration and Rehabilitation in Singapore. Community support is an essential ingredient of successful reintegration of offenders. The Captains of Lives initiative supports offenders from prison to the community, its stages including rehabilitation, renewal, and restart. The Yellow Ribbon Project (YRP) campaign is a high-profile initiative begun in 2004 with aims including to change societies mindset in giving offenders “beyond a second chance” in life!

The YRP has become a national movement, involving collaboration with more than 7,000 partners, and co-creation across custodial, correctional and community boundaries to support integration and prevent reoffending: Clients know that volunteers care about them; they offer wise counsel. “Volunteers are part of the eco-system of support.”

Canada: Katherine Cole presented on the current Canadian realities of remote or virtual volunteering during the Covid epidemic. Noting that as it takes a village to raise a child, it also takes a network to rehabilitate an offender! Correctional Services Canada (CSC) works with about 4,500 volunteers in prisons and with offenders in the community. Varied roles include peer mentorship, support to recreational activities, spiritual services, cultural ceremonies, and accompanying appointments and errands in the community. Before release, inmates draw hope, strength, self-respect, and connection to the outside world through volunteers who also provide pro-social models.

The pandemic has resulted in increased virtual contact including by telephone, mail, email, videoconferencing, and other means. Concerns included access to and use of technical electronic skills, and loss of personal contact. Quality work has required effort to maintain, but CSC has responded to inmates wanting to sustain volunteer contact. “Meaningful interactions” (such as connection to networks and communities) are valued by offenders. Willingness to adapt to change has been evident and innovation has often been due to individual competencies and initiatives, including updated and enhanced communications between all parties, offenders, staff, and volunteers.

As a personal reflection I was struck by reference to the support volunteers can offer staff, such as by reducing stress (and maintaining this during the pandemic), an important aspect of volunteers I hear much less frequently mentioned than their benefits to offenders. As an ex-probation officer, myself, who trained and managed volunteers and worked extensively with them in sometimes tense inner-city community settings, this insight into the potential benefits brought by volunteers to staff, as well as offenders and communities, struck a real chord.

A later session addressed questions and issues concerning volunteer work such as recruitment, training, and agency enthusiasm to engage (variation between statutory and not-for-profit agencies)? The session concluded with a volunteer in the USA describing his experience of “working with” people (not offenders) “sitting on the same side of the table.”

Reflection: In addition to the range of tasks undertaken, and issues raised requiring further consideration, I was struck by the support volunteers can offer staff including reducing staff stress – support maintained even during the pandemic. This is an important aspect of volunteers I hear much less frequently mentioned than benefits to offenders.

Research and evaluation: an international effort?

Reflecting further on the presentations, including the wide range of volunteer roles described, potential impact and benefits to offenders, ex-offenders, agencies, families, communities and staff, the diverse nature of organisation and volunteers, including peers, and a range of other considerations, I noted the lack of research evidence (in Europe certainly) on volunteers and their impact, I raised a question from the floor regarding the potential benefits of increased insight into and evaluation of the work of volunteers through an international research initiative. This would also support the recently launched UN global volunteer initiative. I am hopeful this will materialise!

3) Leaving no-one behind – work with mentally ill offenders and offenders from indigenous populations – responsive, integrated, community approaches.

Mental Health (Japan)

Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Incarcerated Offenders with Mental Disabilities in Japan – a Continuum of Care to the Community.

Professors Ayaka Takai and Tsubura Miyagawa from the United Nations Asia and Far East Institute for the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders (UNAFEI) described work in Japan to improve the rehabilitation and reintegration of incarcerated offenders with mental disabilities. Noting that sentenced persons with intellectual disabilities are at greater risk of reoffending shortly after release, and offenders with mental disabilities are often excluded from the communities where they live after release, the provision of appropriate health care and treatment are key, and support measures in the community should be fully explored and integrated with measures in prisons.

The presenters described a vicious cycle of mental disability and incarceration, with factors including difficulty in earning a living, maintaining relationships with family and friends, and building supportive and trustful relationships with others contributing to further offending. Making correctional facilities safer, healthier, and more supportive and providing support which is seamless and effective are critical to community reintegration – in other words what is needed are “a comprehensive continuum of care protocols and mechanisms”. Important underpinning features include transparency (involving facility visiting committees and an external complaint process), no overcrowding, staff in sufficient numbers and well trained, careful inmate assessment by a psychologist, access to treatment programmes, meaningful activities, and social interaction.

Evaluation shows a very significant increase of 20x in the admission to welfare services since the scheme began. However, issues remain including nearly 10% declining the service. The presenters conclude that offenders with mental disabilities need to be continuously cared for, informed, and fully involved in planning of their own care and pathways. Furthermore, staff need to be well trained to build trustful relationships with offenders, and their mental well-being should be cared or also.

Reflection: This session was an object lesson in integrated systems thinking and delivery. I was especially struck by the “Special Coordination Scheme”. The scheme provides prison to community seamless re-entry *and* involves critical community agencies to ensure a smooth social reintegration of inmates with special needs (including over 65 years and disabilities). Coordination measures include information sharing, assessment, a care meeting, and an extensive and impressive range of services underpinned by requirement for informed consent. Coordinating organisations include the correctional facility, probation office, local authority offices of social support for citizens with disabilities, service providers (for example accommodation, skills training, and employment – services usually provided by the private sector who can receive additional subsidy if they receive offenders) and medical care. These are coordinated by a local authority Community Resettlement Support Centre.

Indigenous Populations

Moderated by Elizabeth Grant (South Australia) with contributions by Jamie Goldsmith (South Australia), Louise Lynch (NSW), Topia Rameka (NZ), Scharlene Lamont (South Australia), and Marty Maltby (Canada), this plenary session addressed several key questions including the challenges for indigenous people in the respective criminal justice systems (CJS), specific cohorts within indigenous populations, examples of promising initiatives or good practices, and a look to possible futures.

Challenges

In terms of challenges for indigenous people in their own systems, **NSW** described over representation in custodial institutions and high rates of reoffending on release. The service is responding with cultural strengthening programmes and addressing learning styles/responsivity including building willingness to engage. Employment is an important focus. Tool kits have been developed including by indigenous workers who, it was remarked, need to be protected too. Acknowledging poor confidence in the system, there is a need for aboriginal people at the policy level and to increase buy-in of the community – essential for community links, support, and belief of the community in the work of the service.

Noting that challenges are also opportunities, transformation is under way in **New Zealand**. “Warm winds” include development of strong alignment across justice agencies regarding indigenous persons. Addressing overrepresentation of Maori people in custody, reduction is a business goal; in response to calls for change from indigenous communities, rehabilitation services are being developed to provide a more humanising and healing approach: at its core is the wellness of the individual. There is a need to double down on community awareness of the work done by CJ service.

South Australia also has a problem of over representation, especially acute in the remand population (60% of women and 40% of men remanded are from indigenous communities). A particular issue is the number of languages used by service users, including by people living a traditional lifestyle in community and sometimes transient. Many are caught up in the system because of alcohol related offences. The service has identified a need to attract and retain good staff from indigenous population.

In **Canada** experiences are similar, although with some difference. Overrepresentation in custody is again an issue: although 5% of the population are indigenous people, they make up 27% of those in custody, a rate which is higher still for women. The profile includes a higher security level than the overall (federal) population with consequent effect on programming, high education needs, and inmates who are more likely to be affiliated with street gangs and violence. Sentences average less than 4 years average, resulting in limited time to address high need. Access to senior levels for indigenous staff needs to be facilitated. It

is desirable to involve more elders, but the justice system is in competition with other services. Indigenous offenders are often marginalised by their community, a factor encouraged by colonial heritage and lack of resources. It was noted that many indigenous offenders haven't experienced their own culture – it begins in custody.

Cohorts

The session then addressed the issue of specific cohorts. Men and women (**NSW**) need different programming, including to address risks. Responsivity requires attention: women may have often lost their home, children, with no-one being available to look after home as is often the case for men. Focus should address trauma, mental health needs and healing. Education and employment are also important. It was noted that staff need education in different skills for female indigenous work including to address domestic violence.

In **NZ** 70% of the women's prison population is indigenous (whilst Maori are 17% of general population). Noting that work in prison is traditionally male-focussed, the service is developing more women-centred practice – an important emphasis is on a humanising and healing approach.

Similarities are noted in **Canada**. Women have higher need for focus on childcare, trauma, and domestic violence. Healing lodges are an important resource but are limited in number. The service needs to recognise the diverse needs of indigenous people including how and where they are received – some have no experience of modern buildings. The service is aiming to ensure access to Inuit elders and mini-healing lodges.

Initiatives

Turning to key initiatives and good practices, **South Australia** is developing collaborative working groups across the public sector involving aboriginal leaders. A core principle is self – determination: working groups include increasing economic participation, relationship with police, over representation in CJS, crime prevention and diversion, vulnerable families, closing the gap, and cultural programmes. Whilst planned release can work well, unplanned release, for example from court, often works less well.

In **NZ** – initiatives include “multi-pathways” co-designed by Maori partners, working from entry to release including family engagement to improve success in reintegration, improved mental health and addictions treatment, and a revised procurement approach to increase connection to indigenous businesses. Work is taken forward in partnership with local traditional tribes and health boards.

Canadian initiatives include legislation which has self-determination and community engagement built in – indigenous communities are involved especially in supporting release including a framework and support networks from admission to release.

NSW is focussed on “closing the gap”, with workstreams for men and women, the latter being especially trauma-informed and holistic, “the programme comes to the women.”

Traineeships are provided by aboriginal organisations and include a major cultural element. The “criminogenic programme” fits in around the cultural needs.

Looking to the **future**, presenters highlighted the impact of digital technology, including for family contact, a need to address remand issues, and increasing focus on responsivity. Facilities are less likely to be

traditional: future facilities will instead be more humanising, and trauma focussed, holistic, draw on traditional medicines, have a smaller footprint, be more effective, and be connected to the communities where people reside. The principle of self-determination will be more to the fore: “Nothing about us without us”.

Reflection: I am struck by the very strong focus on responsivity coming increasingly to the fore in work with indigenous people, focus which recognises also cohorts (women, different indigenous populations). Approaches to improve quality and effectiveness include co-production, cultural responsiveness, and community connection. Organisations also need to address indigenous staff, including well-being and promotion to senior and policy levels. The shift in the focus of work to address trauma, healing and well-being is striking and profound.

4) The importance of organisational factors in reducing reoffending

The BOLD Experiment UK (Transforming Rehabilitation)

This workshop considered, from the point of view of a private provider, the recently reversed major reorganization of the probation service in England and Wales.

MTC won the contract to deliver services in 2 significant geographical areas, London, and the Thames Valley. The presenters described in brief the Transforming Rehabilitation (TR) “experiment” during which about 80% of probation service work was outsourced to predominantly the private sector (to 21 CRCs – Community Rehabilitation Companies – working at the lower end of the risk scales). Higher risk work (and some other tasks) remained with a public National Probation Service (NPS). The widely accepted and public view is that TR was a failure, a view certainly encouraged by its rapid reversal – a view the presenters argued is too simplistic and unhelpful from the perspective of learning lessons.

Arguing that it is demonstrable that much was achieved to overcome challenges that the 21 CRCs encountered, they described inherited difficulties in their two areas including:

- A “longer journey” than expected including insufficient experienced staff (especially in CRCs)
- Poor collaboration between NPS and CRCs
- “Long winded” IT and processes
- A large, required scale of change
- A narrative of failure
- Morale low, workload high, and poor too

The presenters described how they worked to overcome challenges by:

Driving towards a high-quality service, including -

- Empowering people at local level to deliver the best possible service, including meaningfully influence in how to improve
- Lifting of most of the administrative burden to a specialised Service Centre
- Working with the Ministry of Justice to improve their contract (specially to manage quality rather than transactions)

- Tackling a recruitment and retention challenges (job satisfaction, job market, pay and benefits commensurate with other sectors)
- Investment in technology (systems designed by front line staff user groups)

They describe the journey as “far from finished” and suggest that “attracting, empowering and retaining the best people will be key to the future of probation in the UK.”

As evidence of the over-simplistic nature of a conclusion of failure, the presenters offered several quality measures indicating success:

These include improvements to –

- Staff engagement and retention
- Practitioner training and development
- Time for practitioners to practice
- Quality of practice
- Access to services for service users
- Dynamic management of risk

They also point importantly to steady reductions in reoffending, measured in binary terms and frequency, in both geographical areas in which they delivered.

Reflection: In response to a question I raised from the floor regarding practice innovation during their period of contract (an issue not offered in the presentation despite increased practice innovation to tackle reoffending being one of the major arguments offered by politicians for the TR programme) the presenters responded that they were unable to innovate or introduce much in the way of new interventions due to pressures described. Instead, they focussed on getting things right for the people on the ground - innovation would follow. In other words, first get the basics correct including sufficient staff time to practice face to face with clients!

As a former probation officer in the (public) London probation service, albeit long before TR, I should declare an interest. I also leave aside arguments surrounding the undoubtedly controversial TR programme. Instead (and with the important proviso that the workshop considered only a geographical part of the nationwide programme, and furthermore that we would need to compare changes in reoffending in the areas described with changes in other areas, and with trends and other factors in the country as a whole), I am struck by the apparent significant impact of changes at the organisational level on reoffending; these appear to suggest that organisational factors including staff with more time to engage improve effectiveness without changes in methodology. Perhaps an over-simplified implication, and maybe not a surprising one, but interesting, nonetheless.

5) The Uganda PEN Project - the multiple value of creative arts

I conclude with a transferable lesson from the prison environment in Uganda. The PEN project is a partnership involving the Uganda Prison Service and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The session was offered within a session focussed on prisons in Africa (including Kenya, Uganda, and Burkina Faso) which also included the challenges of upgrading overcrowded, inappropriate, colonial era prisons,

decongestion, development of standards protecting human rights, operationalising the principle of public equivalence in prison health, and covid-specific partnerships with health departments which included prioritising the most vulnerable.

The Uganda PEN project involves restoring dignity through creative writing programmes.

Every human being is creative, and every day is an opportunity to discover oneself. As well as educational benefit, the project reports major benefits in prisoner-staff relations. Described as a “pedagogy of hope”, the programme “helps people see themselves as human, discover themselves, feel alive again” and to restore human dignity. Every life counts, “standing alive before the world”. And by helping to understand prison conditions from the perspective of inmates, the project helps officers to “anchor rehabilitative measures”, communicate empathically, and support a reformatory trajectory and reconciliation. Officers are more likely to be seen as supporters rather than enemies.

Reflection: Employing videos of prisoners reading their own poetry expressing “narratives of lived experience” including life in prison, personal feelings or hopes for the future, this was a powerful session about the importance of the experience and future of every individual, of identity, of motivation, and of building understanding, communication, caring, and humanity in our work. Creative art is of course transferable - including in the community setting. I’m reminded of the “Distant Voices - Coming Home”¹ music sessions which featured at a previous ICPA conference. “I’m more than a number, more than a prisoner, more than a judgement” – powerful songs which, perhaps like the PEN writings, explore the experience of people with convictions moving on and have the important potential to reach, engage and inform not only colleagues, building relationships of trust, but informing public perceptions and opinions too.

¹ 'Distant Voices - Coming Home' explores crime, punishment, and reintegration through song-writing and other creative methods and has been developed in a collaboration between the Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research (led by Prof Fergus McNeill) and Vox Liminis (led by Alison Urie), a charity that brings creative practice to criminal justice and its reform.

<https://www.gla.ac.uk/connect/publicengagement/projectsandevents/distantvoices/>