



Media Release

Thursday 31 October 2013

Supporting children of prisoners in the ACT: Program and report launch

A program supporting children who have a parent in prison will be launched today at the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC), along with new research exploring children's experiences of parental incarceration.

SHINE for Kids provides advocacy and early intervention support to children of imprisoned parents and their families to stem the negative effects of parental imprisonment. Operating in NSW since 1982, SHINE for Kids has extended services into Victoria and is now also operating in the ACT.

"SHINE for Kids locates a Child and Family Worker at the AMC in Canberra, who supports children and young people visiting an incarcerated parent to have a positive experience," said Chief Executive Officer of SHINE for Kids, Ms Gloria Larman.

The launch will include the release of research report *Children of Prisoners: Exploring the needs of children and young people who have a parent incarcerated in the Australian Capital Territory*. This paper informs the project "Building Resilience in a uniquely vulnerable group: children of prisoners", which was funded by ACT Health Promotion Grants Program. SHINE for Kids commissioned the Institute of Child Protection Studies (ICPS), Australian Catholic University, to undertake this research.

The research conducted interviews with children and young people between the ages of six and 18, and parents and carers in order to explore their experiences of parental incarceration and to deepen understanding about their needs.

"We found that these children and young people experience a range of challenges, including shame and stigma, increased caring responsibilities, difficulties with family relationships and education, emotional distress, financial disadvantage, challenges in accessing supports, instability and sometimes homelessness," said Project Manager and Research Fellow at ICPS, Ms Vicky Saunders.

"Children and young people often struggle in isolation to cope with these issues, and are often not included in or made aware of decisions made about their incarcerated parents. They said they want services that understand their needs and do not make them feel ashamed or stigmatised for having a parent in prison."

Ms Larman said this project and the resulting research would assist SHINE for Kids design suitable services to support children and families.

Launch: 11am, Facilities Room, Alexander Maconochie Centre, Monaro Highway, Hume ACT.
Event Enquiries: Allira Danks, (02) 9714 3000 or adanks@shineforkids.org.au

Media Contacts:

Gloria Larman, Chief Executive Officer
SHINE for Kids
(02) 9714 3000 or glarman@shineforkids.org.au
www.shineforkids.org.au

Vicky Saunders, Research Fellow
Institute of Child Protection Studies, ACU
(02) 6209 1219 or vicky.saunders@acu.edu.au
www.acu.edu.au/icps