

Policy Statement on Justice & the Impacts of Imprisonment

This Policy Statement outlines the Australian Red Cross commitment to improving the lives of individuals and families who are socially excluded and marginalised as a result of their involvement in the Justice System. Australian Red Cross recognises the role of the prison system in society, but also believes that it is a system that can have damaging long term impacts on those who are imprisoned, their families and the broader community. Australian Red Cross seeks to contribute to a safer and more socially cohesive community by diverting people from crime, reducing rates of reoffending and reintegrating offenders into the community. This will make communities safer, stronger and more resilient while leading to reduced social and economic costs.

Offenders, ex-offenders and their families can be counted among the most vulnerable and socially excluded people in Australia. The evidence shows that offenders often have histories of abuse, neglect, inadequate education, poor literacy, unemployment, poor health and mental health, poverty, cognitive impairment, drug and alcohol issues and homelessness. People are not only excluded from society when they are in prison or youth justice, but having served their custodial sentence, they experience considerable stigma and difficulty in reintegrating back into the community. This can prevent ex-prisoners from fully rejoining the community and participating in society. The Policy on Justice is also inclusive of detainees in immigration detention including those awaiting resolution of their visa status, section 501 detainees, and those subject to trafficking.



Approved by Australian Red Cross Board (Date of Issue: February 2012 - Date of Review: February 2015)

Australian Red Cross will develop skills and capacity to undertake strategic and targeted interventions including in collaboration with others to best contribute to addressing the following issues subject to resources being available:

To prevent the involvement of young people in the Justice System through early intervention

Australian Red Cross is committed to undertaking prevention and early intervention programs, education and information activities and creating pathways to positive social engagement so that young at risk people are less likely to offend and to be incarcerated.

To improve the safety, health and wellbeing of individuals who are incarcerated

Australian Red Cross is committed to improving the safety, health and wellbeing of offenders through a range of health and welfare programs and activities within prisons, including programs to minimise harm, enhance life skills, support and maintain family connections and build personal capacity and resilience.

To reduce the stigma and stress experienced by the families of those who are incarcerated

Australian Red Cross works with families and children of prisoners to maintain family connections and overcome the stress and stigma of having a family member incarcerated.

To support ex-prisoners to successfully reconnect to the community

Australian Red Cross undertakes transition programs and initiatives that support successful reintegration of people back into the community.

To focus on providing support to people who are over-represented in the Justice System as well as those who are particularly vulnerable

Australian Red Cross seeks to provide support to people who are most vulnerable including people who are over-represented in prison populations. This includes a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with mental illness or other cognitive impairments, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds such as those subject to trafficking and s501 visa holders, and people who are homeless or at risk of homeless.

To address the high rates of imprisonment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people

Australian Red Cross seeks to address the high rates of imprisonment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people by working with communities and organisations to develop more effective evidence-based solutions. This work will be informed by the findings of the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* and other social justice reports including the need for development of approaches focusing on early intervention, prevention and community-led alternatives to imprisonment.

To provide alternative pathways and support for ex-offenders to contribute to the work of Red Cross

Australian Red Cross is committed to developing pathways and support for ex-offenders to contribute their knowledge, skills and energies to its work both as staff, members and volunteers.

To advocate to address the underlying causes of crime, the impacts of imprisonment and high rates of imprisonment among vulnerable groups of people

Australian Red Cross seeks to persuade decision makers and opinion leaders to address the causes of crime, the impacts of imprisonment and the high rates of imprisonment among vulnerable people, and to consider alternative measures to imprisonment where appropriate, including Justice Reinvestment.

In working with individuals, and the families of individuals, who are involved in the justice system, Australian Red Cross acknowledges that victims of crime have suffered harm, including physical and mental injury, emotional suffering, economic loss, and impairment as a result of criminal acts and omissions. In line with the United Nations Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power (1985), Australian Red Cross acknowledges and supports the right of victims of crime to be treated with respect and recognition; to be referred to adequate support services; to be afforded the protection of physical safety and privacy; and the right to compensation from both the offender and the State.

This Policy is subject at all times to the wider established HR and Risk Management policies of Red Cross designed to ensure organisational integrity, reputational protection and the safety of our clients, volunteers, and staff.