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COMMUNITY RESTORATIVE
CENTRE

ANNUAL REPORT 2012,

FOREWORD

The Hon. Michael Kirby AC CMG

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THE HON. MICHAEL KIRBY AC CMG^{*}

Once again, it is my privilege to write a Foreword, as Patron of the Community Restorative Centre (CRC).

I congratulate the hard working officers, volunteers, professionals and clients of CRC who have continued to make CRC a most worthwhile organisation.

During the year past, the staff of the CRC has continued to grow so that, at the moment, it is equivalent to 61 full time staff.

The service provision has also expanded. It is now increasingly reaching some of the most disadvantaged people within our communities. They include clients of the Community Justice Programme (CJP), funded by way of the Ageing, Disability and Home Care Scheme. This client group are at risk of reoffending. Some have an intellectual disability. A number have a range of additional physical and mental health disabilities that expose them to the risk of reoffending. The establishment of five funded CJP projects is a significant advance during the past year.

The outcomes of the CRC remain positive. The transition programs managed by CRC show a return to prison rate of less than 10%. This is highly commendable. It reflects well both on the clients and on the professionals, officers and staff of CRC who are there to help them.

^{*} Retired Justice of the High Court of Australia (1996-2009); member of the Eminent Persons Group on the Future of the Commonwealth of Nations (2010-11); UNDP Global Commission on HIV and the Law (2010-12); past President of the International Commission of Jurists (1995-8).

Obviously, the CRC requires funding to maintain and expand this most cost effective and beneficial service. It can only do so by a thorough, rigorous evaluation of its project. Until the statistics and analysis of those projects are totally accurate, the exact rates of re-offending cannot be stated with total certainty. Nonetheless, they certainly express the ball park figure. And this is a desirable one, including for the discerning members of the general public viewing the work of CRC.

In recent times it has been more fully realised that the families of prisoners do not always appear on the radar of public funding bodies. This group of needy people continues to reside in the same communities, including the same postcodes that are revealed in the records of the offender population. Families are often subjected to the same levels of disadvantage faced by prisoners. That disadvantage is often compounded by the incarceration of a family member. Families continue to be ignored as a priority group for support by public funding. This is despite the link that is established between parental incarceration and the incarceration of the children of former and present prisoners. If parliament is serious about prevention of further offending, holistic support for the families of prisoners is essential. I commend to the government and parliament the manifest wisdom and commonsense of this conclusion.

The clients of the CJC continue to have difficulty in assessing appropriate healthcare in the community. Information available to CRC demonstrates that the client base has a significantly higher rate of physical and mental illness than is the norm in the general population. Health authorities of the State should therefore be prioritising support for this group of specially vulnerable persons in the community. It is ineffective and unwise simply to leave their needs to be addressed by the Department of Corrective Services and its officers.

Other important challenges that face CRC continue to be the maintenance of sustainable funding and adequate resources for infrastructure. Two significant projects are currently underway. They include Targeted Housing and Support Service. And the Sustaining Tenancies in the Far West of New South Wales. State and Federal governments have not committed to refunding these projects at the time of writing this Foreword (approximately \$1,000,000 of funding is required). This uncertainty in the provision of stable funding presents a challenge to CRC in its endeavours to develop data bases, set up offices, train and appoint management, establish networks and so forth. The disruption of the withdrawal of funding and of services to vulnerable client groups is often far more serious than for other sectors in the community.

It has to be said once again. Support for CRC can be justified in terms of fundamental human rights and the dignity of every person in society. But it can also be supported by sheer self interest on the part of a discerning community. Helping prisoners and former prisoners can be a most effective cost investment in the future of society. Keeping prisoners from reoffending is important for the community, for the families of prisoners and for the prisoners themselves.

This is the motivation and objective of CRC. As such it is both a moral and an economic imperative for our society.

I congratulate all who have been involved with CRC in the year past. I wish particularly to congratulate Alison Churchill, Chief Executive Officer of CRC, on her recent appointment to the Justice, Health and Forensic Mental Health Network Board of Management. Through this appointment, I hope and expect that she will continue to make a positive contribution to service for clients of CRC and others in our community.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Kirby', written in a cursive style.

The Hon. Michael Kirby AC CMG

Past Justice of the High Court of Australia

Past President of the Court of Appeal of New South Wales

Patron Community Restorative Centre