

Queensland Corrective Services >>



**Pathways to  
Reduced Crime**

Department of Community Safety



# Introduction

Queensland Corrective Services (QCS) is committed to reducing crime.

*Pathways to Reduced Crime* will reduce re-offending by strengthening the focus on tackling the causes of crime and correcting offending behaviour.

Crime can be reduced, and the cycle of re-offending broken, by holding offenders to account and providing opportunities to make reparation for the crimes they have committed, by ensuring they are appropriately supervised in custody and in the community, and by encouraging and assisting them to change their offending behaviour.

Actions provided under this strategy will be responsive to the diversity of the offender population, and will prioritise offenders who pose the greatest danger to the community or who are most over-represented in the correctional system.

The strategy will also ensure that resources invested by the Government on behalf of the communities of Queensland are provided where they will most benefit the community.

# Objectives

Under *Pathways to Reduced Crime*, QCS will:

## ***Promote Community Safety***

Queensland Corrective Services will promote community safety by holding offenders accountable for the crimes they have committed and by providing opportunities to make reparation for their offending. Offenders will be appropriately supervised, and encouraged and assisted to stop offending.

## ***Prioritise Effort and Resources***

Resources will be invested where they will do the community the most good.

By prioritising offenders who pose the greatest danger to the community or who are most over-represented in the correctional system, QCS will maximise crime prevention outcomes for offenders, their families and the community.

## ***Maximise Opportunities***

Queensland Corrective Services will ensure offenders are properly prepared for release, progress through the system in a timely manner and are properly supervised.

## ***Be responsible and accountable***

Ensuring QCS efforts are lawful, consistent with policy and best practice as well as being socially and fiscally responsible will increase community confidence in our accountability.

## ***Build strong partnerships***

Respecting diversity and difference amongst offenders will lead to better crime prevention outcomes. Building strong and responsive partnerships with families, non-government service providers and local communities provides the foundation for reducing repeat crime.

# Pathways to Reduced Crime

There is growing evidence to show that broad, multi-modal approaches to preventing re-offending over the course of an offender's sentence, and beyond, are often more effective than point-in-time interventions such as a stand alone program. Such approaches align a range of services, supports and interventions as whole of sentence pathways embedded in offender management systems, processes and practices.

Critical objectives linked to outcomes for prisoners and for offenders supervised in the community include:

- Employment and a structured lifestyle
- Stable and positive social support
- Stable family relationships
- Community and cultural integration
- Moral belief system
- Pro-social goals and a desire for a better life.

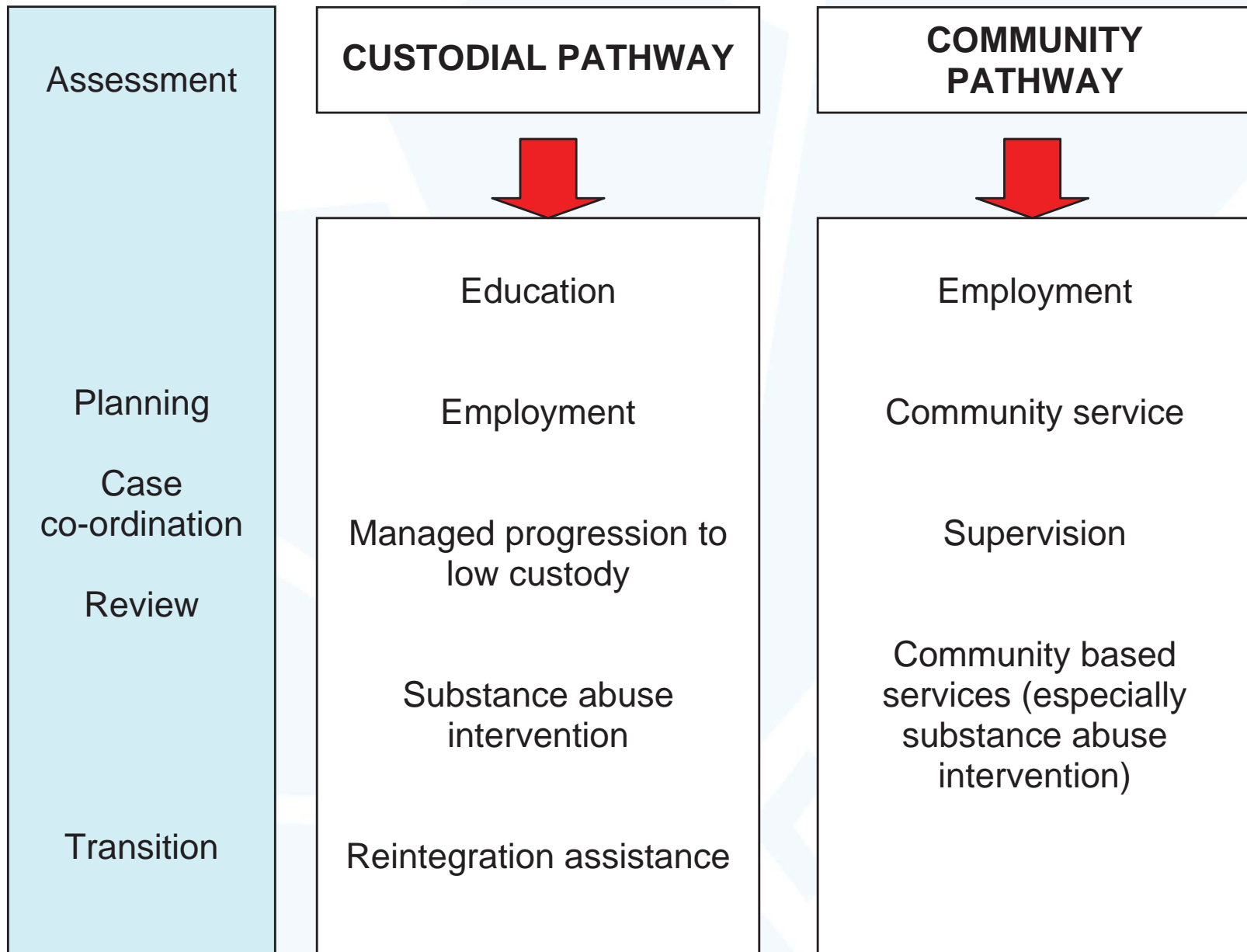
For most prisoners, these objectives can best be achieved through opportunities to work, access education and training, address substance abusing behaviour, participate in managed progression through the custodial system, and receive assistance in safely returning to the community on release.

Offenders supervised in the community benefit most from assistance in securing and maintaining employment and accommodation, accessing community-based services (esp. for the treatment of substance abusing behaviours), performing community service, and being under an active and responsive supervision regime.

Based on this evidence and taking into account the obvious differences between custodial and community settings, *Pathways to Reduced Crime* provides for two pathways embedded in the broader offender management approach; one for prisoners and one for offenders supervised in the community.

Research has also shown that working with offenders to instil a commitment to pro-social change can increase the effectiveness of crime prevention efforts. Beliefs that change is attainable, attributions about personal control over events and circumstances and beliefs about the value of living a crime-free lifestyle are important for staff to model and encourage in their work with offenders.

## PATHWAYS TO REDUCED CRIME FOR ALL OFFENDERS

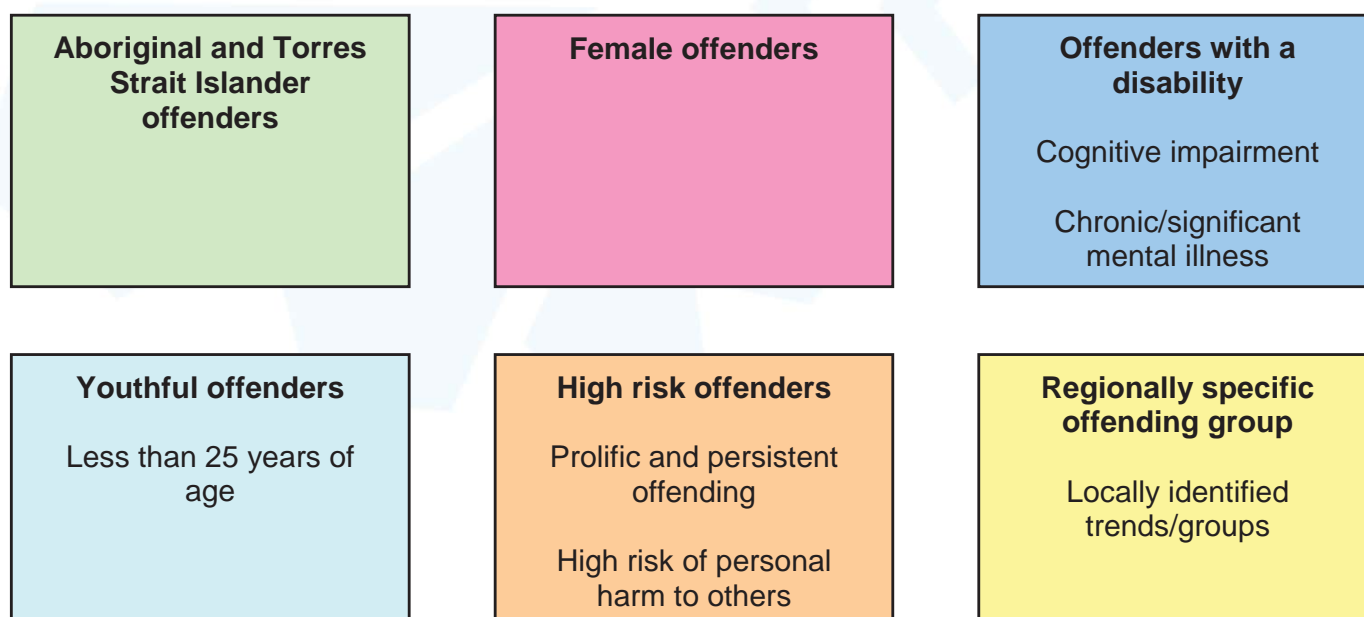


# Priority Groups

Many offenders will desist from offending through participation in the pathways to reduced crime. A number of offenders will however cycle repeatedly through the criminal justice system before making the decision or finding the means to change their lives. Included in this group are those who commit a disproportionate amount of crime, those whose offending causes the greatest harm to the community, and those who face the greatest obstacles to changing their offending behaviour.

Such offenders require assistance in overcoming histories of disadvantage, changing ingrained patterns of offending behaviour, and in assuming the responsibilities required of adult members of the communities. Offenders who will be prioritised for individually tailored pathways include:

- Those who pose a high risk of harm to the community including those who are dangerous as well as those who are persistent or prolific offenders.
- Offenders with disability including intellectual or cognitive impairment as well as those suffering significant functional impairment due to mental illness.
- Youthful offenders under 25 years of age at the early stages of offending.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offenders.
- Women offenders.
- Regionally identified offending groups requiring localised knowledge and intervention.



### **High risk offenders**

This group consists of offenders who are considered high risk by the Agency, such as sexual and violent offenders including those subject to the Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act 2003. It also includes offenders who have the potential to cause harm due to the persistent or prolific nature of their offending, defined either by their risk of reoffending (as assessed by the Agency) or by having numerous offences across multiple contacts with the criminal justice system.

These offenders require specialised assessment, management and intervention including increased surveillance and supervision to ensure community safety is protected. Evidence-based principles of offender rehabilitation support the use of high-intensity cognitive behavioural programs for these offenders. A well-established evaluation evidence base for their effectiveness exists. Reviews show interventions such as intensive sexual and violent offending programs can reduce reoffending by as much as 30%. In addition to targeted use of programs, there will be a strong focus on the provision and maintenance of employment and stable accommodation for these offenders to assist them in adopting sustainable prosocial behaviour.

Of course it is not possible to prevent all re-offending, and for some offenders, community safety can only be adequately protected through stringent supervision or the continued detention of these individuals.

### **Offenders with a Disability or Impaired functioning**

Offenders included in this priority group are those with significantly impaired functioning due to chronic mental illness, intellectual disability, cognitive impairment or physical disability. Research indicates that there are high levels of mental illness and cognitive impairment within offender populations. Statistics from other Australian jurisdictions report up to 50% of prisoners have some form of mental illness whilst 20% suffer serious cognitive impairment.

These offenders often present with challenging behaviours and can be difficult to manage. Many require additional assistance and support to cope with routine daily tasks both within custody and whilst living in the community.

The focus of pathways for these offenders is on identification, increasing adaptive living and coping skills, accessing supported accommodation and specialised employment assistance. Stronger partnerships with Queensland Health, Department of Communities and community-based agencies specialising in mental health and disability support will be developed by the Agency to improve outcomes for this group of offenders.

### **Youthful Offenders**

Young offenders are usually defined as those under 25 years of age. Early on-set offenders, those who begin offending as children, have been found to be at high risk of becoming serious persistent offenders. Research has shown that intervention with offenders at the beginning of an offending trajectory can prevent future reoffending.

In particular early intervention can reduce both severity and duration of future offending behaviour. Research has also shown that offending behaviour may not be as entrenched with young offenders as it can become later.

Research has noted that for these offenders targeted re-entry (for prisoners) and reintegration (for community based offenders) programs focused on addressing substance abuse and mental health issues are likely to be most effective for young offenders. There must also be secure and stable accommodation, employment and strong social support mechanisms. In particular a focus on employment, education and provision of strong pro-social role modelling during supervision will be the focus of QCS service delivery to this group.

### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Offenders**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offenders continue to be over-represented in Australian prison populations and community corrections caseloads. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons represent 3.4% of Queensland general population but nearly 30% of the prison population and 20% of those under community supervision.

Research shows that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offenders experience high levels of social disadvantage through, among other things, poor literacy and numeracy, substance abuse, housing problems, unemployment and poor health outcomes. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offenders are more likely than non-Indigenous offenders to be both victim and perpetrators of crime. They are more likely to come into contact with the criminal justice system earlier than other offenders, have more frequent contact and have shorter intervals of time between contacts. There is also research to indicate that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offenders who come to the notice of child protection authorities as children are more likely to end up in the criminal justice system.

Given these challenges faced by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offenders, areas of focus suggested by current research include integrated responses that focus on education (particularly improving numeracy and literacy), addressing substance abuse and addiction and providing stable employment and accommodation.



It is also important that programs and services are culturally appropriate, and acknowledge culture and values.

### **Women Offenders**

Female offenders make up a growing proportion of the prisoner population. Women are generally more likely to be incarcerated for property, drug and violent offences than men. Approximately 45% of all women prisoners and 70% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women prisoners have been incarcerated previously.

At the time of incarceration most women are unemployed and have low levels of education. Women offenders often have victimisation histories of sexual and physical abuse and domestic violence. They suffer from significant rates of chronic and debilitating mental illness, and a high prevalence of substance abuse.

The establishment of family, community and social supports has been shown to be key success factor for women offenders. Improving mental health, addressing substance abuse, addressing child custody issues, improving self-esteem and self-efficacy (including addressing personal safety and domestic violence) are also important.

### **Regionally Specific Priority Offender Group**

Given the size and diversity of Queensland, it is likely there will be issues specific to communities or locations requiring particular groups of offenders, other than those identified above, to be prioritised for crime prevention. The Regional Specific Priority Offender Group provides for local crime reduction initiatives targeting other identified groups, as approved by the Agency.

# Pathways to Reduced Crime for Priority Groups

Prisoners and offenders in the nominated priority groups may receive tailored pathways designed to reduce reoffending. Five additional (to those contained in the primary pathways) crime reduction strategies for priority group offenders have been identified based on current research.

The provision of addiction treatment, interventions addressing specific types of offending behaviour, enhanced employment and resettlement assistance, functional support, and assistance to strengthen primary pro-social relationships and cultural and community integration will improve outcomes for priority group offenders.

## **Addiction Treatment**

Drug use has consistently emerged as a significant risk factor for general criminal and violent behaviour. The presence of alcohol or drugs during offending behaviour is common and can have significant influence on the circumstances surrounding the offending.

Research with Australian prisoners has found that two thirds (66%) reported using illicit drugs in the 12 months prior to entering prison and more than half (58%) reported excessive alcohol consumption.

Drug use was most prevalent with young, non-Indigenous prisoners (79% compared to 24% in the general population) while problematic alcohol consumption was relevant amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners. Seventy-three percent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male prisoners and 74% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander female prisoners consumed alcohol at hazardous levels compared with 50% and 35% of non-Indigenous prisoners respectively.

In addition prisoners tend to be poly-drug users with over half (54%) using more than one type of drug including alcohol. More than 1 in 10 prisoners regularly used at least six different types of drugs.

Gambling addiction has also been shown to contribute to crime as those addicted seek income to continue gambling. Gambling prevalence surveys with Queensland prisoners and offenders under community supervision have found the incidence of problem gambling amongst these populations to be up to 20 times higher than in the general population. Twelve point four per cent of prisoners admitted their offending related to financing a gambling problem, and 21.7% of people under community supervision had serious gambling problems needing treatment.

Along with access to medically supervised detoxification, the focus of services to address addictions could include brief interventions and counselling, substance abuse programs, pre-release linkages to community based treatment and peer support groups.

### **Offending Behaviour Programs**

Offending behaviour programs remain the most proven means of addressing sexual and violent offending. The strongest evidence of effectiveness is for cognitive-behavioural approaches, premised on the assumption that particular ways of 'thinking that lead to criminal conduct are learned and get reinforced by the outcomes resulting' from those ways of thinking. Behaviours resulting from those ways of thinking can be changed through learning new ways of thinking and new behavioural skills.

Queensland Corrective Services currently delivers best-practice, group based cognitive-behavioural programs to address sexual and violent offending, and substance abuse related offending. These will continue.

### **Enhanced Employment and Resettlement Assistance**

In Queensland 55.8% of those admitted to custody and 43.4% of those admitted into community supervision reported they were unemployed. This is compared to a state average of 5.7% unemployment.

The rate of unemployment at the time of admission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offenders is significantly greater. Research has estimated that between 60% and 70% of those who reoffend are unemployed at the time.

An individual's ability to gain and maintain employment can be impacted by a number of factors. Some individuals have poor literacy, numeracy and technical skills as a result of truancy and poor education experiences in their past. Approximately a third of all offenders in Queensland have an education level lower than Year 10, while over 80% have less than Year 12 education.

Homelessness or lack of stable accommodation also impact on attaining and maintaining employment. Research indicates that homelessness is often associated with poverty, family breakdown, social disorganization and crime. Studies have found that the homeless have higher arrest rates than those of similar age and gender with stable accommodation. Being homeless or at risk of homelessness seems to contribute more to the chance of someone re-offending than drug use or poor relationships. UK research has shown addressing accommodation problems by offenders can reduce reoffending by up to 20%.

Also important to increasing offender employability are good communication skills and appropriate attitudes towards punctuality, reliability and motivation to work. These can be affected by issues such as poor mental health or cognitive impairment. Research has found that offenders have significantly higher levels of both. Improving offenders' functional capacity can be just as important as assisting them to gain good numeracy and literacy levels.

In addition to these difficulties, offenders also have to contend with the consequences of having a criminal record. Research indicates that employers prefer not to hire a person with a criminal record.

Components of this strategy may include pre-release employment assistance, employment and living skills training, more intensive vocational education and training, and accommodation assistance.

### **Functional support**

Research has established there are significantly higher rates of mental illness, intellectual disability, and impaired cognitive functioning in offending populations than in the general community. For example, a survey in 2000 found that over half of all female prisoners in Queensland had a diagnosed mental health condition.

Unaddressed, these problems undermine offenders' ability to cope with the challenges of everyday living, and greatly heighten the risk of re-offending. Functional support with the goals of increasing emotional stability, developing adaptive coping and living skills, building resilience, and developing and maintaining supportive relationships is a critical crime reduction strategy for offenders with impaired functioning. Access to supported accommodation, specialised employment assistance, and government and community-based specialists can also be important.

### **Family and Relationship Support / Community and Cultural Integration**

The purpose of this strategy is to strengthen protective factors of family, and pro-social relationships, community and cultural integration. A stable family life, a positive intimate relationship, pro-social supports, a community network, and strong cultural identification are associated with reduced risk of re-offending. Re-entry literature shows that prisoners with stronger social and family supports are found to have lower recidivism rates.

Conversely, one of the most common risk factors noted in research evidence on offending is poor social capital including a lack of social support. Having criminal associates such as friends who have been arrested or a history of family criminality (i.e. a parent or relative involved in crime) has consistently been shown to be a major risk factor for re-offending. Many empirical studies have linked delinquency and adult crime to antisocial families.

The strategy will include greater involvement of family and community supports in offender management processes, including rehabilitation planning, parole application, and release preparation, increased opportunities for ongoing interaction between offenders and cultural and community groups, and better provision of advice to offenders' families and supports.

# Model of the Pathways to Reduced Crime

The diagram below shows the proposed *Pathways to Reduced Crime*. All offenders access one of the two primary pathways. Both have the objectives of employment and a structured life-style, stable and positive social support, stable family relationships, community and cultural integration, moral belief system, and pro-social goals and a desire for a better life.

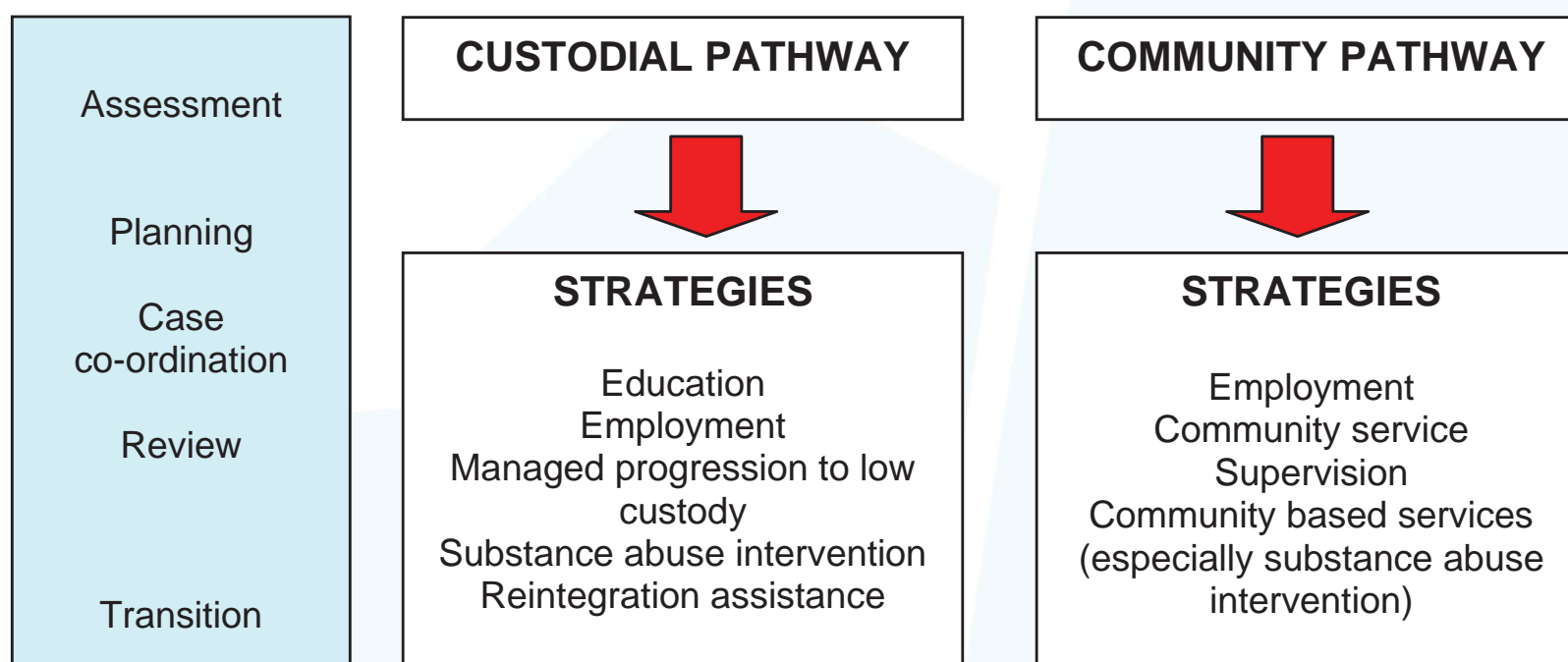
As the means to achieve these objectives, the custodial pathway for prisoners emphasises prison employment, substance abuse intervention, managed progression and reintegration assistance. The community pathway for offenders under supervision by the Probation and Parole Service focuses on employment, community service, supervision, and access to community-based services.

Offenders belonging to one or more of the offender priority groups, in addition to accessing one of the primary pathways, may access individually tailored pathways incorporating one or more crime reduction strategy for priority groups.

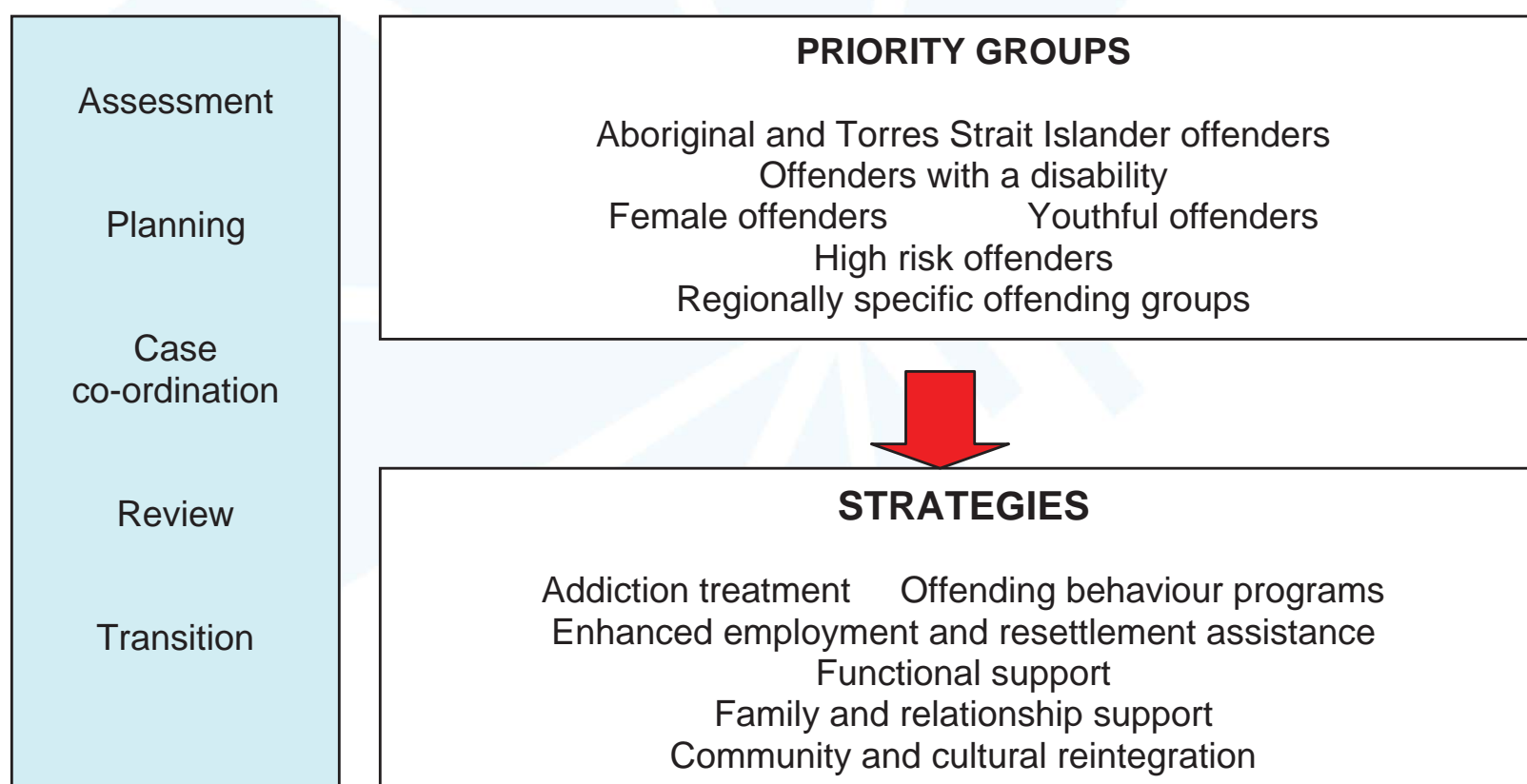
Targeted rehabilitation strategies for these offenders are addiction treatment, offending behaviour programs, enhanced employment assistance, functional support, family and relationship support and community and cultural integration.

The model also shows the anticipated outcomes from *Pathways to Reduced Crime*. An evaluation plan to measure and monitor the effectiveness of the strategy is described in the following section.

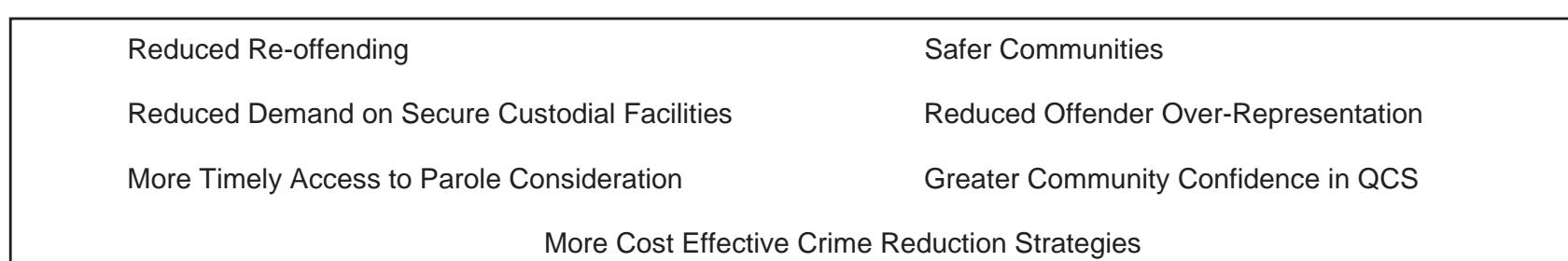
## PATHWAYS TO REDUCED CRIME FOR ALL OFFENDERS



## PATHWAYS TO REDUCED CRIME FOR PRIORITY GROUP OFFENDERS



## PATHWAYS TO REDUCED CRIME OUTCOMES



# Action Plan

To achieve the objectives of *Pathways to Reduced Crime*, an action plan is being developed and progress will be regularly reported to the QCS Board of Management.

Key actions will include:

Communication strategies that allow QCS to keep connected to staff and stakeholders, and allow us to share progress and seek input

A range of strategies that build QCS organisational capability to effectively rehabilitate offenders based on the principles outlined in *Pathways to Reduced Crime*, such as new and revised training packages

Development of offender pathways that focus on education and employment

Development of offender pathways that target the needs of priority group offenders

Development of tools and resources for staff that work with offenders including assessors, sentence managers, intervention staff and offender/case managers

Consolidation and development of effective and efficient service delivery models

Development of partnerships with the community that support rehabilitation and allow development of local solutions and responses to regional priority group needs



# Evaluation and Monitoring

QCS will evaluate *Pathways to Reduced Crime* by identifying and reporting outcomes achieved through the implementation of the framework.

It will incorporate three levels of evaluation, being integrity, impact and effectiveness. Integrity is the extent to which pathways are accessed by offenders as intended. It is determined by local site-monitoring against defined standards, observation of practice and service delivery, and review of program products (such as participant workbooks). Impact is defined as the change in intervention targets attributable to the intervention, and for the most part assessed through change between pre-intervention to post-intervention in relevant measures. Effectiveness is determined by differential rates of re-offending associated with participation versus non-participation.

Applying this approach to evaluating *Pathways to Reduced Crime* identifies three key objectives. These are to:

1. Determine the extent to which QCS effort overall is delivered consistent with *Pathways to Reduced Crime*, and the extent to which services and interventions are delivered as intended;
2. Determine the extent to which objectives are achieved. Key offender pathway objectives include:
  - Employment and a structured life-style
  - Stable and positive social support
  - Stable family relationships
  - Community and cultural integration
  - Moral belief system
  - Pro-social goals and a desire for a better life.

Additional objectives of strategies directed at priority group offenders include:

- Treated addictions
- Criminogenic needs / dynamic risk factors addressed
- Stable accommodation, increased employability
- Reduced impact of disability, cognitive impairment, and significant mental illness.
- Increased family and relationship support, and greater community and cultural integration

3. Determine the extent to which crime reduction outcomes associated with those objectives, are achieved. Key outcomes are:
  - Reduced re-offending
  - Reduced rates of sexual and violent re-offending
  - Reduced demand on secure custodial facilities
  - Reduced over-representation of priority group offenders
  - More timely access to parole consideration for prisoners
  - Greater community confidence in preventing re-offending
  - More cost-effective crime reduction strategies.

The QCS Board of Management is responsible for overseeing crime reduction efforts across the Agency, for monitoring achievement of delivery targets and objectives, and for reporting on effectiveness in delivering on outcomes.

