



ATCA

**AUSTRALASIAN
THERAPEUTIC
COMMUNITIES
ASSOCIATION**

**DISABILITY INCLUSIVE MODELS
OF CARE IN THE AOD
TREATMENT SERVICE SECTOR**

Gerard Byrne – Chair ATCA.

**Alcohol & Other Drugs
Disability
and
Overrepresentation in the
Criminal Justice System**

*forging new partnerships and
pathways to achieve
better outcomes*

The 2020 Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability found that:

- **People with disability, particularly First Nations people with disability, are overrepresented** at all stages of the criminal justice system.
- The AIHW estimates that **people with a disability form 29%** of Australia's prison population.

Tough on crime approaches are **indiscriminate** as they do not consider the person or the factors that contributed to the offending behaviour. The approach is further indiscriminate, as **being tough on crime does not consider the specific needs of people with disabilities** - at all levels of the CJS.

This is borne out in **increased imprisonment rates across Australia**. So much so that imprisonment seems to be the main stay of being tough on crime.

Alternatives such as **community-based correction orders, diversion to treatment, home detention, community service orders** are now only getting increased traction within the sentencing framework. These responses need to also consider the needs of people with disabilities.

Despite these options, and other non-custodial options being available for some time their position in the sentencing landscape of the criminal justice system has not been high – particularly for repeat offenders.

This where the excellent support of diversion programs by AOD services, and **by therapeutic communities provided by ATCA members**, is critical to **reducing the over representation of people with disabilities in the prison system**.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people comprise about 3 per cent of the Australian population and yet account for 29 per cent of the prison population (ABS 2020b).

While the majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have never committed a criminal offence, the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in prison remains a central and persistent issue for Australia's criminal justice system.

The rate of imprisonment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is 13.3 times the non-Indigenous imprisonment rate. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disabilities are also overrepresented.

Australia's Prison Dilemma. The Productivity Commission 2021.

FORGING NEW PARTNERSHIPS & PATHWAYS TO ACHIEVE BETTER OUTCOMES

AOD services, including members of the ATCA, work hard to achieve this goal the reality is that this feature of an integrated service system that is mature enough to provide the necessary options for people with disabilities seeking to access an AOD service – **is a work in progress**

Partnerships are being forged with:

- Disability service providers **carry the specialist & specific knowledge** that AOD services can learn from
- Health and allied health services also play a key part in partnerships, in terms of both supporting AOD clients with a disability and the **building of the capacity of AOD services to continue to develop their disability inclusive responses.**

How do disability inclusive models of care in the AOD treatment service sector look:

- Inclusive treatment communities for all
- Collaboration
- Support local networks
- Sharing practice wisdom
- Care coordination
- Common goals
- Collective accountability
- Avoiding duplication
- Sharing specialisation
- Bringing people together, particularly and most importantly people with living experience.

The AOD treatment service sector, including ATCA members, has embraced then following:

- Recruitment of people with disability
- Providing staff with disability awareness training
- Providing other clients / residents with disability awareness sessions
- Participation of people with disabilities in service design
- Modifying buildings to ensure they are suitable – when possible
- Reviewing program materials to ensure they are suitable
- Implementing signage and other resources to support blind, deaf and vision or hearing-impaired people
- Ensuring adequate resources and supports (language interpreter, Auslan)
- Building linkages with disability employment and training providers

Disability inclusive models of care in the AOD treatment service sector **can significantly contribute to the removal of** attitudinal, behavioural and physical barriers, and contribute to equal access to services.

I will also contribute to people feeling valued and respected.

Thank you

