



# Prisoner's Kids: The Invisible Victims of Crime

An evidence-based report on the  
importance of a holistic approach to crime

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For  
**Second Chances SA**



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**NOVA**  
SMART SOLUTIONS



## Executive summary

This report from Nova Smart Solutions presents thorough, evidence-based research that shows South Australia is facing a critical issue - the alarming lack of awareness of the situation of children following the imprisonment of a parent.

The current legal, prison and educational systems neglect these kids. In South Australia, when a person is imprisoned there is not any formal record that captures his or her parenthood status. This data-capture failure contributes to neglect the needs of a group of overlooked and vulnerable children that are themselves highly likely to end up in prison.

The failure to track the status of these children risks fostering an intergenerational cycle of crime. Whilst there is little research about the probability of Prisoner's Kids ending up in prison, the US Department of Justice estimates that imprisoning a parent increases the likelihood of their children becoming incarcerated by up to six times.

**But, how can we reduce the probability of Prisoner's Kids (PKs) going to prison?** We know from international literature that investing in social programs targeted to support PKs has

a positive impact in their lives and a very high return (i.e. for every dollar spent there is an impact ten times larger). Nevertheless, due to a lack of awareness by community and authorities about PKs, only few organisations in our country are taking action to tackle this issue.

In South Australia, Second Chances SA (SCSA) has identified this issue. SCSA is the only agency in South Australia (within and outside of Government) that works implementing programs that reduce the probability of PKs going to prison.

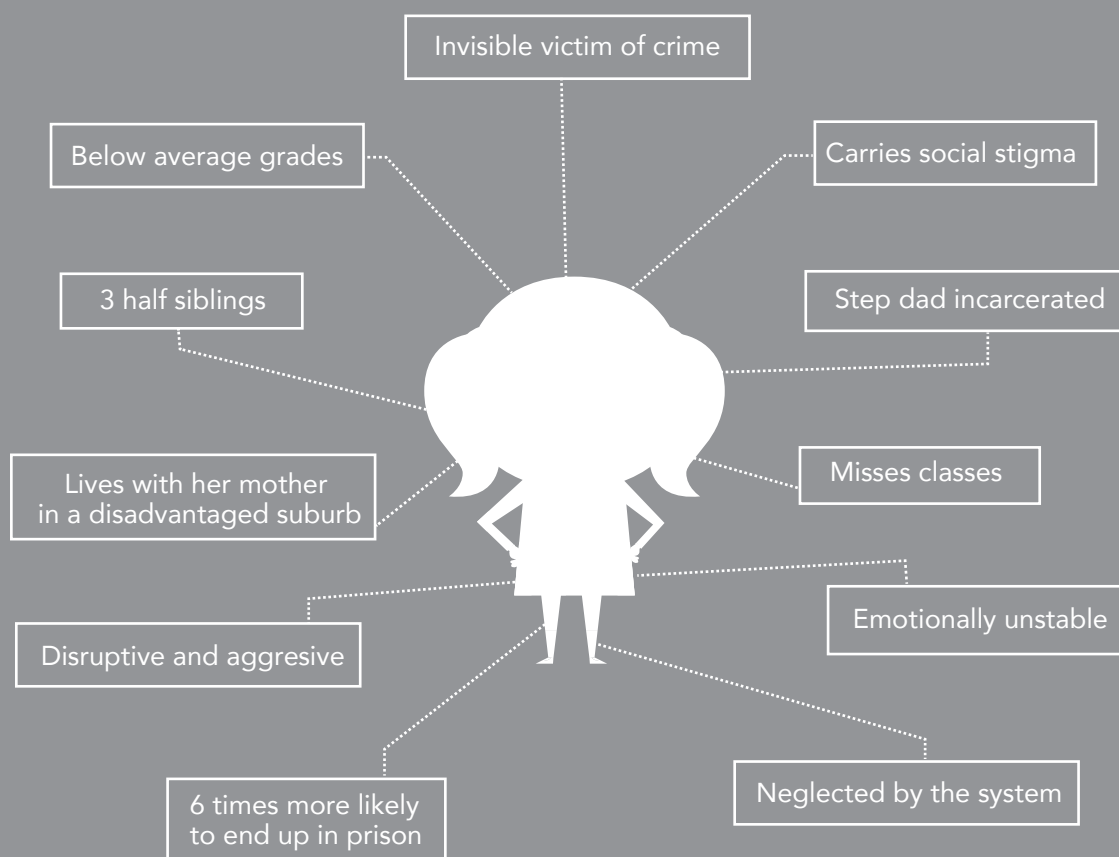
This report presents an issue that we face as a society and breaks down the work that SCSA is currently doing with PKs. The benefits brought to our community by SCSA's holistic approach needs further financial support to continue and improve its impacts in the future. South Australia cannot afford not having programs that address the invisible victims of crime: Prisoner's Kids.

# What is the Issue?

- Innocent Victims of Crime
- Intergenerational Imprisonment
- Community Ignorance



# Skylah's Story: A South Australian Prisoner's Kid



Skylah lives with her mother and three half siblings in Davoren Park. She is 13 years old and the oldest in her family. Skylah's mother Kimberly is a single mother, who struggles daily with the issues of being a single parent. Her step dad, who has been her father figure for 8 years, has just gone back to prison on drug trafficking charges. It's not the first time Skylah's step dad Richard, has been incarcerated. The family is unsure how long he will be away for this time.

Skylah has started a new local High School where there are still a lot of issues at school and she is often getting into fights,

and missing classes on a regular basis. When she is at school, teachers say "she has trouble focussing on her work and is regularly disruptive in class". A social worker from Skylah's community believes her disruptiveness and aggression are caused by the imprisonment of her step father.

On top of Skylah's social issues, her mother finds it very difficult to manage four children by herself. She feels that she has failed in her parenting responsibilities and is frightened that she may not be able to give Skylah and her brothers the love and care they need, she has a serious concern about their future.



# Issue Definition and Considerations

## How can Second Chances SA reduce the probability of Prisoner's Kids (PKs) going to prison?

When crimes are punished with incarceration, families of prisoners in particular and the community in general can be significantly impacted, without a comprehensive approach to the prisoners' surrounding circumstances.

While prisoners are serving their sentence, innocent PKs are the forgotten victims of crime. **Today, the number of children of prisoners is not centrally collected or reported.** This information is only anecdotally captured or via manual reviews of individual case files. PKs end up serving a life sentence themselves and the community as a whole pays the consequences of intergenerational incarceration, as the PKs propensity to commit crime and costs associated with it increase.

Extensive literature identifies that legal, prison, welfare and education systems usually overlook the special needs of prisoner's kids and inadvertently punish these children for their parents' actions.

*"Failure to recognise and address the needs of these children and their carers can be very costly both economically and socially as prisoners' kids often exhibit **emotional, social and behavioural problems** (which sometimes lead to criminal behaviour), have health problems and perform poorly at school. The problems of these children over their lifetime are likely to incur increased social welfare, justice and health costs and conversely, reduced income from taxes". (Woodward, 2003)*

Children's development in their earliest years fundamentally shape their chances in life. Emotional, social and behavioural issues will result in significant capabilities gap between prison-

er's kids and their counterparts. This gap increases dramatically unless early intervention programs are deployed as a priority.

In addition, maintaining the youth justice supervision system represents an elevated expense for the Government. For the 2014-2015 period, 357 young South Australian youths between 10-17 years old were under justice supervision on an average day. Of these, 50 were supervised in detention, while 307 were under community supervision (Australian Government, 2016b). The South Australian Government spends \$1,193 daily for each youth under detention-based supervision (Australian Government, 2016a), representing an annual expense of \$435,445 per individual.

**Assuming that Second Chances SA can prevent ten of these children from being locked up, this then represents saving South Australian taxpayers a total of \$4.3 million per year.**

### Probabilities and Tax Money Savings

In 2014-2015, the total amount of South Australian youths under detention was 420 (Australian Government, 2016b) and, during the same period of time, there were 158,027 children between 10 -17 years in the State (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015).

$$\begin{aligned} &\text{SA Children's Probability to End Up Detained (P)} \\ &= \\ &\frac{\text{Total Number of Youth Under Detention}}{\text{Total Number of Children in SA (10-17)}} \\ &P = \frac{420}{158,027} = 0.27\% \end{aligned}$$

Using these numbers, we estimated the likelihood for any child to end up in jail in South Australia. This probability equals 0.27% or in other words, **13 out of 5,000 South Australian Children could eventually be imprisoned.**

Considering that the likelihood for a PK to end up in prison is six times higher than a non-PK (Woodward, 2003), our calculations indicate that **the probability for a PK to end up in prison rises from 0.27% to 1.62%.**

To date, Second Chances SA has worked with a total of 814 PKs. Using our 1.62% calculation, we can infer that 13 out of these 814 youths would be detained, representing a total **cost of \$5.6 million dollars to the State Government.**

## Success Cases

There is sound evidence of positive outcomes obtained by organisations applying integrated approaches to improve the wellbeing of vulnerable children.

An example of success is the Integrated Family Support program which operates in prisons of **England and Wales**, improving outcomes for prisoners, their families and children. They work together with the community to decrease the chance of inter-generational crime; to ensure local community services know when a parent is imprisoned, thus ensuring early intervention; and to gain improved access to support within their community. An analysis conducted on the Social Return on Investment estimated that for every £1 (AUD 2) invested, an impact of £11 (AUD 22) was generated (Estep, B. et al 2012). Hence the potential benefits to the State range between £515,465 (AUD 1,008,731) and £3,479,294 (AUD \$6,878,755) over one year. These benefits come from costs savings across sectors including justice, foster care, health, housing and employment.

Integrated programs such as the Multisystemic Therapy (MST) also produce a significant impact on their clients. MST pro-

grams are established in jurisdictions of **North America, United Kingdom, Australia and Europe** and include an intensive family-based intervention for severe behavioural disorders in young people aged 10-16 years. This program is directed to the offenders and also includes their family, school and community in their interventions. It addresses risk factors and builds against reoffending using an individualised case management approach including in-home visits. Furthermore, it is goal-oriented and creates links into community support. As a result of implementing MST programs, the estimated reduction in long-term reoffending ranges from 25% to 70% delivering \$1.62 for every dollar spent on expanding the program (Noetic Solution Pty Limited, 2010).

The Innovative Community Action Networks (ICAN) and its Flexible Learning Options (FLO) in **South Australia** is another initiative that shows positive results. It aims to improve education and employment outcomes for children and young people. A cost-benefit analysis of the FLO made by Deloitte in 2012 considered direct benefits and costs and estimated a benefit to cost ratio of 1.9. The estimation increased to 2.2 when considering indirect costs and benefits (Deloitte 2012). This means that for every AUD \$100,000 invested there are monetary benefits of approximately AUD \$220,000.

Shine for Kids (SFKs), a **New South Wales organisation**, delivers positive outcomes supporting children. Among SFKs program outcomes are: reduction in traumas, anxiety and isolation around incarceration, promoting healthy, happy families; support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to draw on their culture and heritage to overcome the challenges of incarceration; inspiration to children and young people to make futures that steer away from crime and its consequences. Shine for Kids is able to deliver the services they render in a large degree thanks to the financial support of the NSW State government and the Australian Federal Government that altogether provides 44% of their total income respectively (Shine for Kids Annual Review, 2015).

# Solving the issue

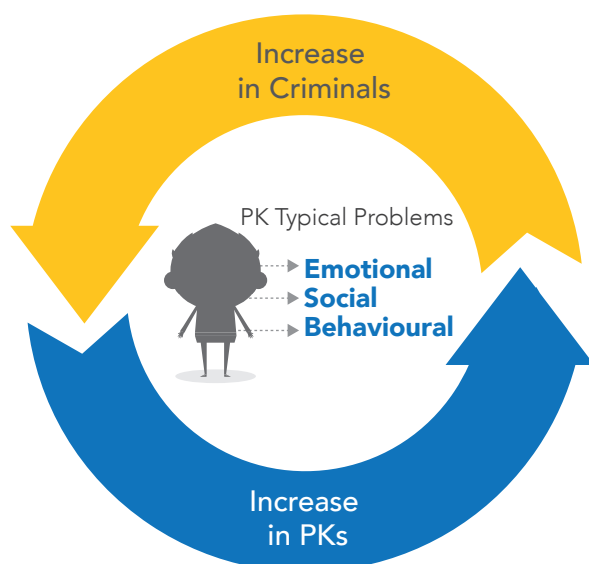
- Holistic Approach to Addressing Intergenerational Imprisonment
- Empowering Disadvantaged Youth
- Targeting Vulnerable Demographics



# Why Does SCSA Work to Reduce the Probability of PKs Going to Prison?

In South Australia, PKs are the forgotten and innocent victims of crime. The education, prison, legal and welfare systems tend to overlook the special needs of kids of prisoners. PKs often experience social stigma and isolation and display a wide range of emotional, social and behavioural problems. Imprisoning a parent increases the likelihood of their children becoming incarcerated by up to six times (Woodward 2003).

South Australian prisons have exceeded their capacity by 27% (ABS and Department for Correctional Services). There are more prisoners (2,732) than the current system supports (2,148). If the average growth of prisoners (6.48%) and the current capacity remains constant, by 2018, the capacity will be exceeded by 53%.



## 27%

Prisons in SA have exceeded their capacity



## X6

PKs likelihood to end up in prison

# \$435,445

Total annual expense to maintain a youth detainee

Sources:  
Australian Government,  
Australian Bureau of Statistics

## Imprisonment Rates\*



## 65%

Increase in SA imprisonment rate 2005 vs 2015

## 19%

Increase in Australia's imprisonment rate 2005 vs 2015

## 2005 vs 2015

NT	566.9	NT	885.1
WA	229.7	WA	278.2
NSW	190.4	<b>SA</b>	<b>204.4**</b>
Qld	179.3	NSW	199.9
<b>Australia</b>	<b>164.2</b>	Qld	197.7
Tas.	149.5	<b>Australia</b>	<b>195.8</b>
<b>SA</b>	<b>123.7</b>	Vic.	134.4
ACT	108.5	ACT	131.3
Vic.	95	Tas.	129.6

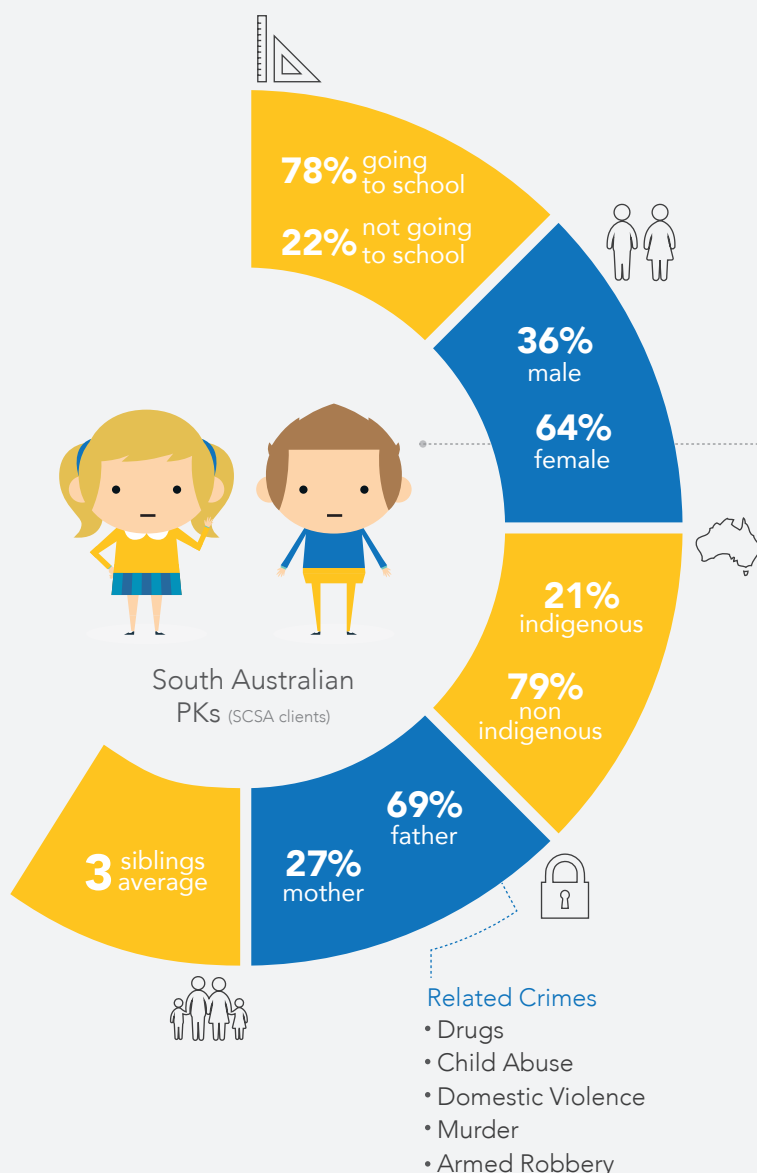
\*Imprisonment Rate: prisoners per 100,000 adults

\*\*In only ten years, South Australia has surpassed the national rate and has jumped from the 7th to the 3rd position.



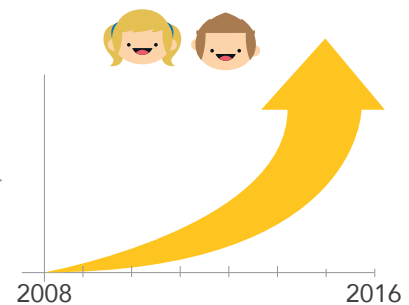
# Who is SCSA's Target Population?

Since 2008 the team behind SCSA has been supporting South Australian Prisoner's Kids. Second Chances SA through the Prisoner's Kids Family Care Team initiative works with children aged 0 - 19 who have an imprisoned parent.



Second Chances SA improved

## 814 PKs lives



Second Chances SA is there to support PKs in every transition point \*

- 3 Starting Kindergarden
- 6 Starting Primary School
- 12 Starting Secondary School
- 17 Leaving School









Other important moments in PKs lives

- Parent goes into prison
- Parent returns home from prison
- New step father
- New siblings
- Death of family member

\* SCSA tracks children's well being across the five different domains of the Australian Early Development Census - AEDC (Physical health, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills, communication skills and general knowledge).

# What is SCSA Doing to Reduce the Probability of PKs Going to Prison?

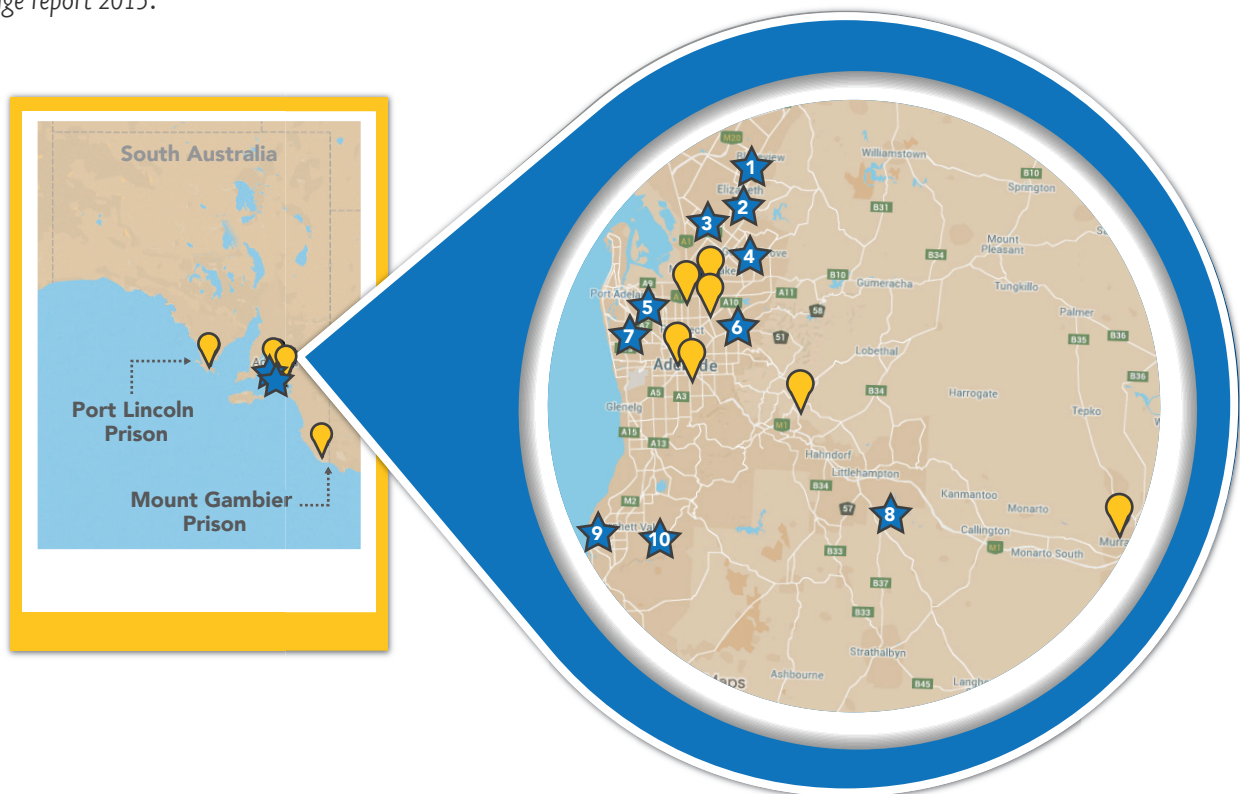
Second Chances SA provides support for PKs living with the trauma of parental imprisonment through a range of services that the Prisoner's Kids Family Care Team (PK FCT) provides. Services include home visiting, short-term support and mentoring camps as well as improving the capacity of young people to engage with other organisations<sup>1</sup> and the community in a positive way.

	Description	Number of PKs	Number of Services	Number of Organisations
1	 <b>PK Mentoring Camps</b> Designed to give PKs a camping experience to teach them character building values like teamwork, trust and respect.	60 PKs pa	8 camps pa	6 sponsors pa
2	 <b>Home Visits</b> Child focussed activity carried out by the PK Family Care Team. Follow-up campers before and after camps.	146 active	460 pa	1
3	 <b>Playford Drop-in Centre</b> Vulnerable children attend each Wednesday afternoon Davenport Park to socialise and have a safe space to play.	20 PKs pw	50 pa	3
4	 <b>Networking Activities</b> Activities like conferences, support events and liaising with other NGOs and key stakeholders.	40% of PKs referred through networking relationships.	20	124 networks
5	 <b>Responding to Referrals</b> Assistance to agencies, schools and teachers who have difficulty managing behaviours of PKs at school.	20	20	20
6	 <b>Food Hampers</b> Non-perishable groceries collected from Foodbank and Churches. Ordered and delivered at Christmas.	240 PKs pa	120 hampers	4
7	 <b>Birthday Presents</b> New presents for PKs. Imprisoned parents complete a form allowing their child to receive a present on their behalf.	180	180	2
8	 <b>Christmas Angels</b> Two presents individually wrapped and delivered at six different low security prisons.	520	1040 presents	2

<sup>1</sup> Second Chances SA works with organisations like Foodbank SA, Anglicare, Salvation Army, TogetherSA, Wyatt Foundation and Radio Life FM.

# Where Does SCSA Work?

Second Chances SA provides support services to imprisoned South Australians and their families across the State, including some of the State's most vulnerable regions. Their volunteers currently visit eight out of nine prisons in SA. The PK FCT provides home visits focusing in 10 different postcodes including those classified as "Most Disadvantaged" by the *Dropping off the edge* report 2015.<sup>2</sup>



★  
Post codes  
where SCSA  
currently works  
(home visits)

- 1 5113 Playford- Elizabeth \*
- 2 5112 Playford \*
- 3 5108 Salisbury \*
- 4 5127 Tea Tree Gully
- 5 5012 Port Adelaide Enfield \*
- 6 5074 Campbelltown
- 7 5023 Charles Sturt \*
- 8 5251 Mt Barker
- 9 5165 Christies Beach \*
- 10 5163 Hackham \*

📍  
Prisons  
that SCSA  
volunteers  
currently visit  
each week:

- Metropolitan Prisons
- Adelaide Remand Centre - City
  - Yatala Labour Prison - Northfield
  - Adelaide Women's Prison - Northfield
  - Adelaide Pre-Release Centre -Northfield
- Country Prisons
- Mobilong Prison – Murray Bridge
  - Cadell Training Centre
  - Port Lincoln Prison
  - Mount Gambier Prison

<sup>2</sup> Twenty-two indicators are used to measure social well being, health, community safety, economic and education outcomes and locations are then ranked according to their susceptibility to disadvantage.

\* Post codes marked with a star are those classified as "Most Disadvantaged" and "Disadvantaged" by the *Dropping off the edge* study.

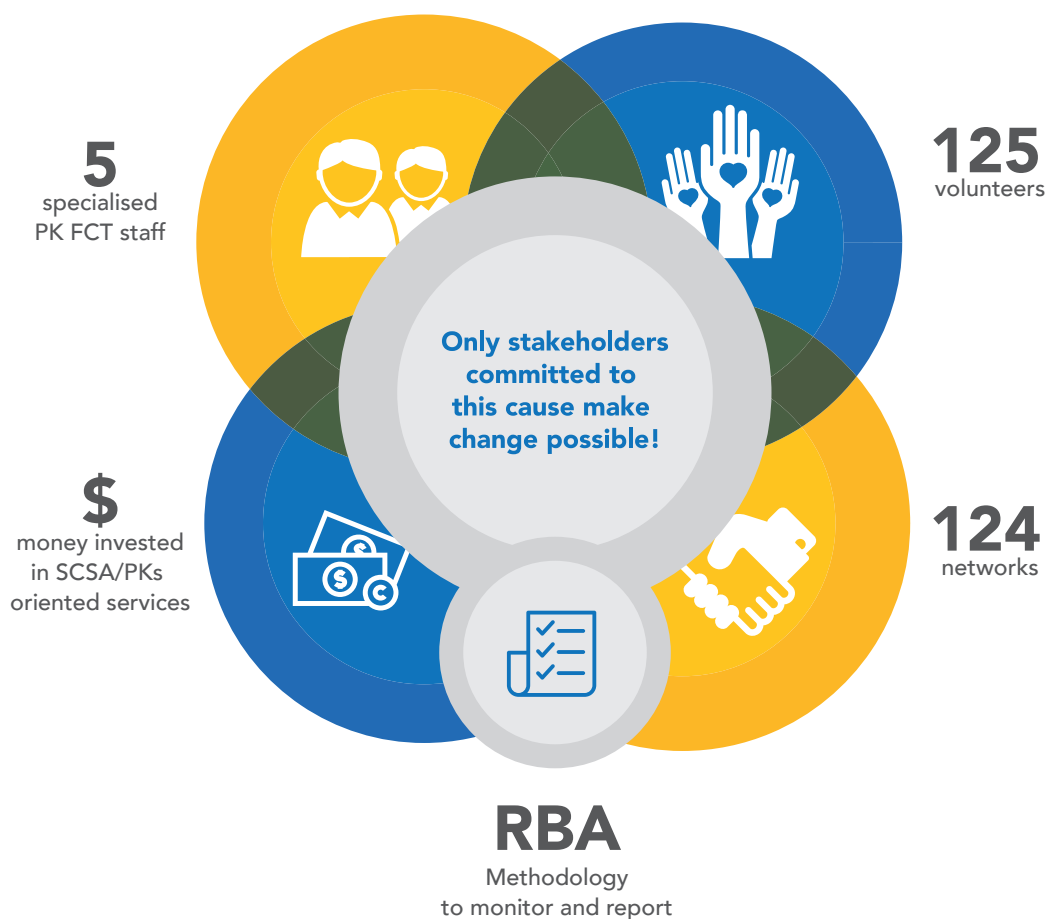
# How Does SCSA Tackle the Issue?

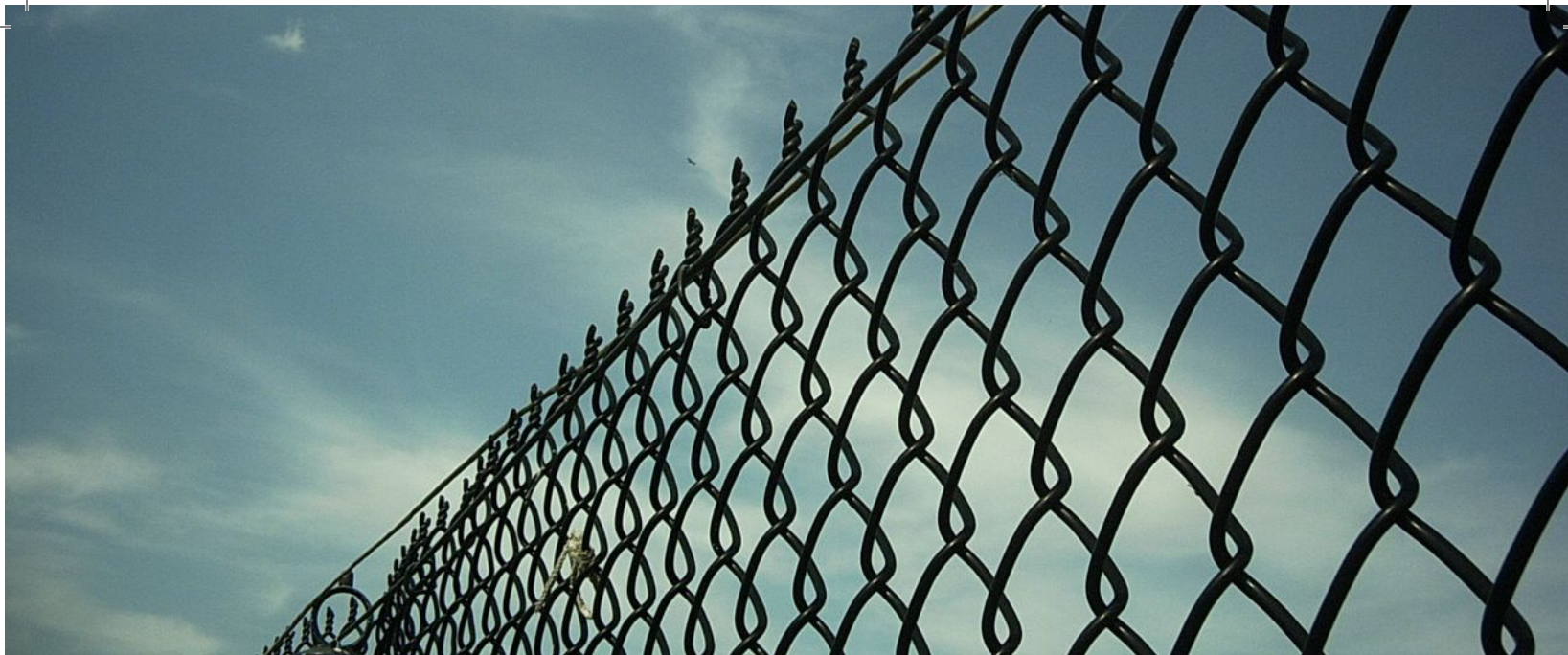
SCSA adopts a holistic approach to breaking the cycle of offending by empowering children and providing them new pathways to overcome the barriers they face. This is achieved by two main foundations: a committed and qualified staff (PK FCT) and a strong engagement with the broader community.

The PK FCT is passionate about encouraging PKs and restoring their dignity. The PK FCT is a relational service that works with clients to empower and support positive goal-setting.

SCSA works together with a number of individuals and organisations from the community. Volunteers, schools, churches, community services and Government agencies are strong partners that allow the delivery of crucial services.

SCSA implements the RBA methodology to monitor its processes and outcomes. SCSA keeps track of indicators such as: Clients reporting sustained lack of contact with the justice system for 12 months and Clients showing improved functioning. SCSA meets government requirements and is accountable to stakeholders and the community.





## Conclusion

Second Chances SA has become the primary agency in South Australia addressing the specific needs of PKs. With vast experience working with South Australian prisoners and their families, Second Chances SA's unique holistic approach is meeting a real need that has not previously been addressed. Second Chances SA provides a vital service for the families of prisoners, the communities in which they are located and the wider South Australian population as a whole.

Our current legal, prison, welfare and education systems neglect a key impact of incarceration on prisoners lives - the impacts on their families and children. Prisoner's Kids (PKs) are the forgotten victims of crime and while their parents serve their sentence, PKs serve their own.

Children's development in their earliest years is fundamental and the capabilities gap between PKs and their counterparts is significant. PKs often exhibit emotional, social, behavioural and health problems and usually perform poorly at school. In addition, having a parent in prison increases a kid's likelihood to end up in prison by up to six times.

On top of an evident negligence on PKs, South Australia currently faces a worrying increase in its rates of incarceration. Numeric evidence demonstrates that South Australia's imprisonment rate

has increased in rank from the 6th (ten years ago) to the 3rd highest imprisonment rate among all Australian states. There's an intergenerational cycle that needs to be urgently addressed. If imprisonment rates continue rising the number of PKs will also increase, thus perpetuating an already existing vicious circle.

There is sound evidence of positive outcomes for children obtained by organisations working on integrated programs that improve the wellbeing of PKs. South Australia currently relies on the work Second Chances SA does to keep PKs out of prison.

Through its holistic approach, Second Chances SA's PK Family Care Team is working in eight different programs to reduce the offending probability for prisoner's kids. Detained-based supervision is very costly for South Australian taxpayers. Preventing only one PK to end up under youth justice supervision saves the State Government over \$400,000 per year.

**As a community, we cannot afford more time overlooking a problem that requires immediate attention.** PKs remain largely invisible and do not feature as a priority for government policy and statutory welfare bodies. Strategies and further funds must be allocated to continue and improve programs targeted to reduce the probability of locking up a Prisoner's Kid.



# SCSA and Prisoner's Kids Family Care Team History

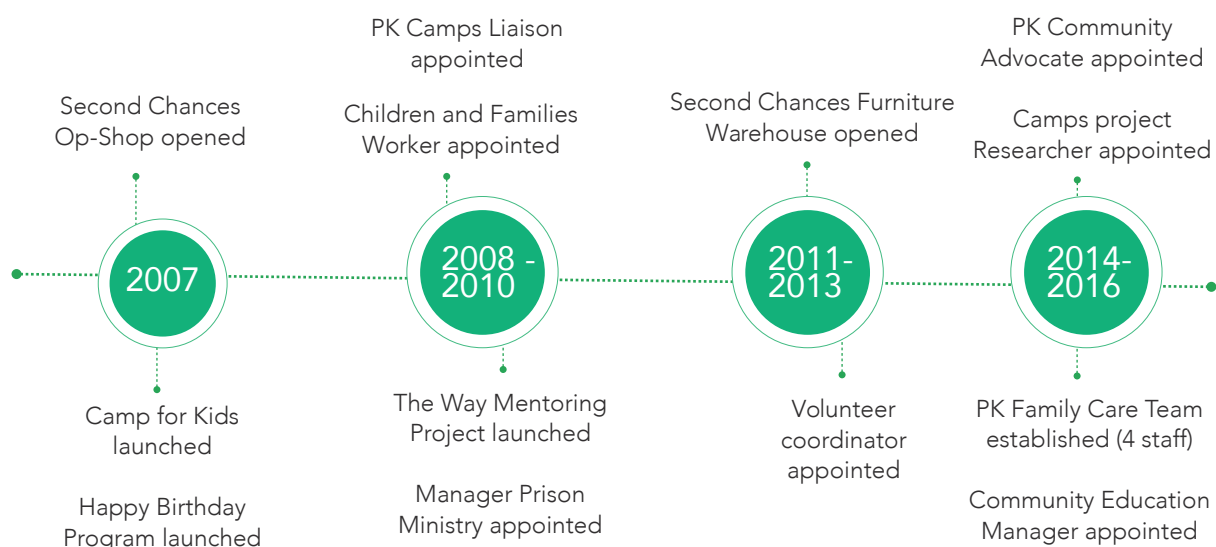


Second Chances SA is a not-for-profit organisation whose staff and volunteers have a history of 20 years working with South Australian prisoners providing diverse services to prisoners and their families.

Back in October 2007, SCSA launched the first Camp for Prisoner's Kids. This helped Second Chances SA understand the urgency of providing a holistic and inclusive approach that included not only prisoners but their families and kids as well. One year after, in September 2008, they appointed their first part-time Children and Families Worker.

In 2013 SCSA received \$490,000 from State Government support through the Department of Communities and Social Inclusion Special Youth Grant which gave them the opportunity to create the PK Family Care Team (PK FCT) program. Commencing in January 2014, the PK FCT started as a **three-year pilot program** and has adopted a holistic approach to provide essential services to vulnerable children. Current funding will end in December 2016.

Today, the PK Family Care Team is a solid unit of work built over more than 20 years of experience that provide services that **no other organisation in South Australia does.**





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