

CONCURRENT SESSION

## C10 Supportive housing after prison

# **Exiting prison with complex support needs: the role of housing assistance**

Supportive housing after prison

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# Acknowledgement of Country



Respect to the Ngunnawal, the first people of this country.

Respect to Ngunnawal elders past and present.

Respect to other Indigenous people at today's meeting.

# The research project



Martin, C., Reeve, R., McCausland, R., Baldry, E., Burton, P., White, R. and Thomas, S. (2021) *Exiting prison with complex support needs: the role of housing assistance*, AHURI Final Report No. 361.

Part of the AHURI Inquiry into enhancing the coordination of housing supports for individuals leaving institutional settings

Linked data analysis, interviews, policy and statistical reviews

Focus on NSW, Vic and Tas

# The homelessness-imprisonment connection

Estimated 65,000 prison exits p.a. (Aus)

Exiting prison and 'going home'

- 44% expect to be in temporary accommodation
- 10% don't know where they'll live

33% of prison entrants previously homeless

Unstable housing post-release predicts reincarceration: half move 2+ / 9mths; 60% reincarcerated (3x) (Baldry et al 2003)

Prior imprisonment predicts homelessness (1.5x) (Bevitt et al 2015)

# The homelessness-imprisonment connection

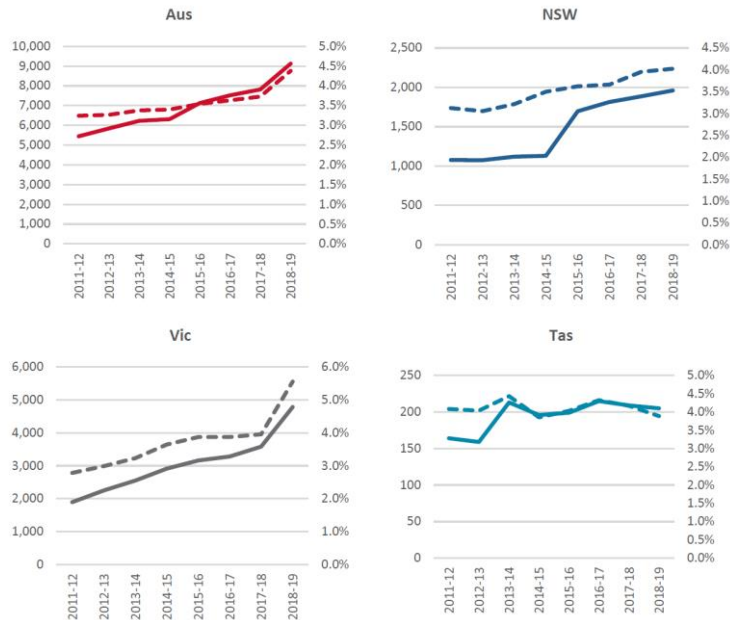
Figure 10: People exiting custody seeking assistance from homelessness services, Australia, NSW, Victoria, Tasmania, 2011-19

Ex-prisoners as a priority group in homelessness strategies

‘No exits into homelessness’ objective

Ex-prisoners fastest growing SHS client group

Tiny transitional sector with high program churn (lots of pilots)



Key: Solid line, left-hand scale = adult SHS clients exiting custody (number); dash line, right-hand scale = adult SHS clients exiting custody as a proportion of all clients (%).

Source: The authors, drawing on AIHW data (AIHW 2019a).

# Policy context

## Imprisonment rising

- 60% have been in prison before
- Some objectives re recidivism, but not imprisonment rates

## Prisons as aggregators of disadvantage

- 40% diagnosed mental health condition
- 65% illicit drug use
- 29% disability or chronic health condition

## Prisons as inherently afflictive and harmful

Figure 5: Prisoner populations and imprisonment rates, Australia, NSW, Victoria and Tasmania, 2010–20



Key: Solid line, left-hand scale = prisoners (number); dash line, right-hand scale = imprisonment rate (per 100,000 adults).

Source: The authors, drawing on ABS data (ABS 2020a).

# Policy context

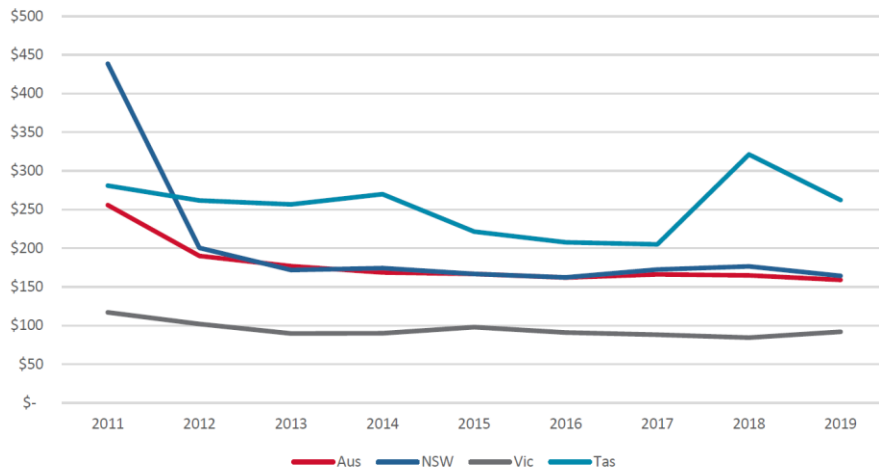
## Homelessness policy uncertainty

- Late 2000s priority (The Road Home, NPAH, Housing First)
- 2010s impetus lost
- 2020s some return to (state) priority

## Social housing declining

- No Cth stimulus
- Recent boosts in Vic and Qld (off low base)

Figure 12: Real per capita social housing expenditure, Australia, NSW, Victoria, Tasmania, 2019



Source: The authors, drawing on SCRGSP data (2020: Table 18A.1).



# Post-release pathways – what we heard

41 interviews, including 6 ex-prisoners

- Housing is crucial to desistance, reintegration and the delivery of support for people with complex needs, but there is a dearth of housing options.
- Pre-release planning is constrained by heavy workloads; transitional accommodation and support are tightly prioritised and rationed.
- The lack of accommodation options means planning is often left until very shortly before release.

*From a Housing perspective, we only engage with people a couple of weeks before they get out... All the pre-planning doesn't really yield any value.  
(NSW HA1)*

# Post-release pathways – what we heard

People exiting prison face a fraught pathway through various forms of temporary accommodation—motels, caravan parks, SHS facilities and private boarding houses.

- TA can be a useful stop-gap, but having to rely on it is highly stressful.
- There is a high level of dissatisfaction with private boarding houses but of necessity use is still made of them.

- The accommodation offered by SHSs varies. Large congregate services and shared spaces pose risks to residents.
- Barriers to private rental are formidable, and often impossible to overcome.
- Social housing has challenges of its own, and support services tend to drop away after a tenancy commences – but SH provides affordability and security, and space for personal fulfilment and engagement with support.

# Quantitative analysis of linked data

## The MHDCCD Databank

- Linked data for 2,731 persons who were in prison in NSW between 2001-08, mostly with MH condition and/or CD.
- Data from BOCSAR, Police, CS, DCJ, including Housing.

Comparative interrupted time series analysis

Cost benefit analysis

## Intervention and Comparison groups:

- Public housing post release (n 623)
- Private rental assistance only (n 612)

## Subgroups:

- Male/female
- Indigenous/non-Indigenous
- Complexity of diagnoses
- Age at first prison exit

# Quantitative analysis of linked data

After public housing:

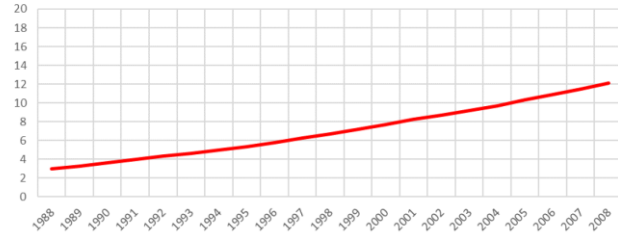
- Police incidents: down 8.9% p.a.
- Court appearances: down 7.6% p.a.
- Proven offences: down 7.6% p.a.
- Time in custody: down 11.2% p.a.
- Time on supervised orders: following an initial increase, down 7.8% p.a.
- Justice costs per person: following an initial decrease of \$4,996, down a further \$2,040 per year per person.

Women, Indigenous people, and people with multiple diagnoses see improvements similar to people outside those subgroups. Age is associated with a small additional improvement for most measures.

- A public housing tenancy for an ex-prisoner generates a net benefit of between \$5,200 and \$35,000 after five years (v private rental and SHS).
- NB average wait for PH 5 years; if provided sooner, greater \$ benefit.

# Quantitative analysis of linked data

Figure 13: Average predicted number of police incidents per annum, for people with rental assistance only following exit from prison



Source: The authors, drawing on MHDCC data (2020).

Figure 14: Average predicted number of police incidents per annum, before and after first receiving public housing following exit from prison



Note: Public housing received at year 0.

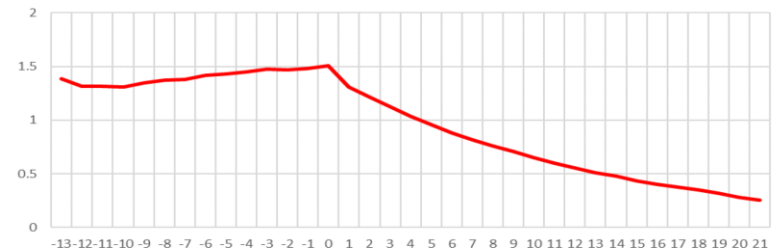
Source: The authors, drawing on MHDCC data (2020).

Figure 15: Average predicted number of finalised court appearances per annum, for people with rental assistance only following exit from prison



Source: The authors, drawing on MHDCC data (2020).

Figure 16: Average predicted number of finalised court appearances per annum, before and after receiving public housing following exit from prison

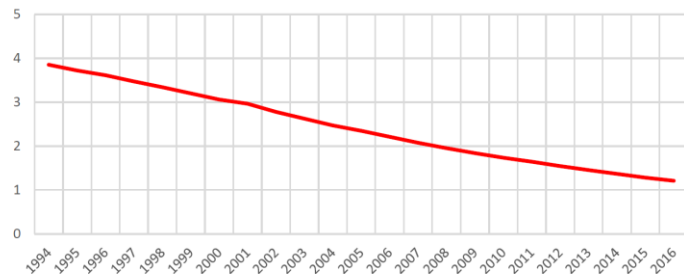


Note: Public housing received at year 0.

Source: The authors, drawing on MHDCC data (2020).

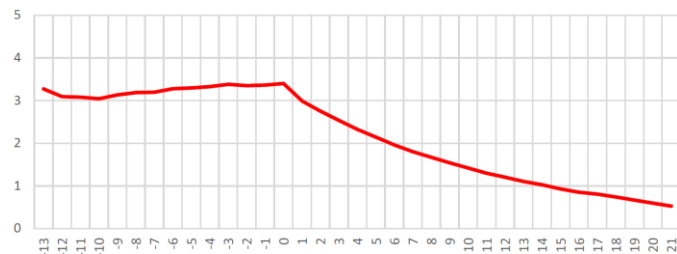
# Quantitative analysis of linked data

Figure 19: Average predicted number of proven offences per annum, for people with rental assistance only following exit from prison



Source: The authors, drawing on MHDCC data (2020).

Figure 20: Average predicted number of proven offences per annum, before and after receiving public housing following exit from prison



Note: Public housing received at year 0.

Source: The authors, drawing on MHDCC data (2020).

Figure 21: Average predicted number of days in custody per annum, for people with rental assistance only following exit from prison



Source: The authors, drawing on MHDCC data (2020).

Figure 22: Average predicted number of days in custody per annum, before and after receiving public housing following exit from prison

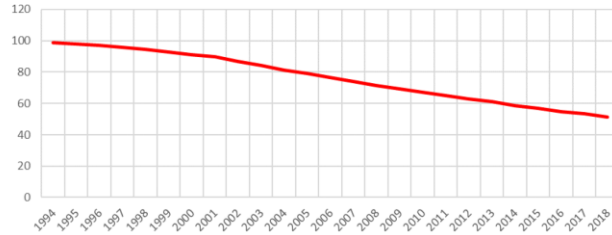


Note: Public housing received at year 0.

Source: The authors, drawing on MHDCC data (2020).

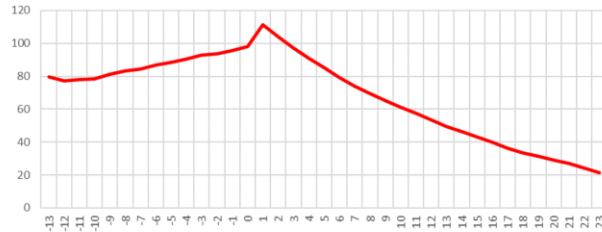
# Quantitative analysis of linked data

Figure 23: Average predicted days on supervised community order per annum, for people with rental assistance only following exit from prison



Source: The authors, drawing on MHDCC data (2020).

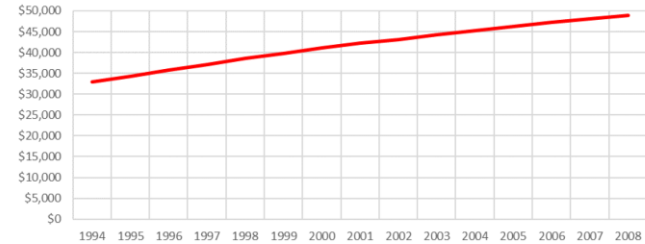
Figure 24: Average predicted days on supervised community order per annum, before and after receiving public housing following exit from prison



Note: Public housing received at year 0.

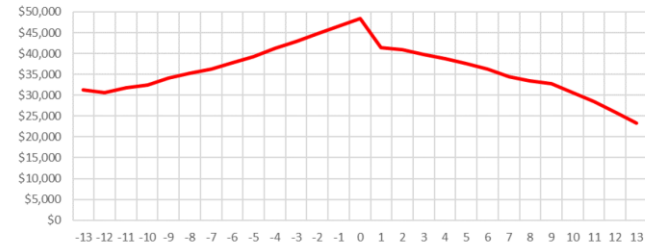
Source: The authors, drawing on MHDCC data (2020).

Figure 25: Average criminal justice costs, for people with rental assistance only following exit from prison



Source: The authors, drawing on data from SCRGSP (2017; 2020); BOCSAR; Goodall, Norman et al. (2008).

Figure 26: Average criminal justice costs, before and after receiving public housing following exit from prison



Note: Public housing received at year 0.

Source: The authors, drawing on data from SCRGSP (2017; 2020); BOCSAR; Goodall, Norman et al. (2008).

# Conclusion

The evidence strongly supports the need for much greater provision of social housing to people exiting prison, particularly for those with complex support needs.

Earlier provision of housing expected to have greater impact on reduced reoffending and associated cost.

Housing is crucial but may not be effective/sustainable in the absence of other support services.

Relatively secure, affordable public housing is a steady 'hook for change' that a person exiting prison can hold onto as they make changes in their circumstances, and in themselves, to desist from offending. It is also a stable base from which to receive and engage with support services.