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BEYOND 'HARD TO ENGAGE': RESHAPING THE NARRATIVE OF INCARCERATED COMMUNITIES EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS THROUGH THE NSW REINTEGRATION HOUSING SUPPORT PROGRAM EVALUATION

Dr. Stella Settumba Stolk
Marisa Moliterno

Acknowledgement of Country

We would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we are located today, Garramilla, the lands of the Larrakia people of the Larrakia Nation.

We recognise the continued connection to land, water, and community and pay respects to Elders past and present. We would like to extend that respect to any First Nations people participating in the conference today.

We acknowledge the tireless advocacy and work undertaken by First Nations people in advocating for systemic change in the criminal legal system.



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Introductions: CRC



About the Community Restorative Centre

Founded in 1951, CRC is a lead NGO in NSW providing specialist support to people affected by the criminal legal system and their families, with a particular emphasis on the provision of post-release and reintegration programs for people with multiple and intersecting needs on release from prison.

All CRC programs aim to reduce recidivism, break cycles of criminal legal system involvement, and build genuine pathways out of the criminal legal system

What we do

Transition & Reintegration

Intensive casework for individuals leaving custody to secure stable housing, employment, healthcare, and other supports

Telephone, Information & Referral Service (TIRS)

Information and referral for anyone affected by the criminal legal system, including family, friends and service providers

Advocacy, Research and Policy Unit

Advocates to change the structural inequalities and punitive policies that drive over-imprisonment

Training & Capability Building

Building workforce knowledge, skills and capacity to improve responses to criminalisation, imprisonment and social exclusion

Key Outcomes & Impact:

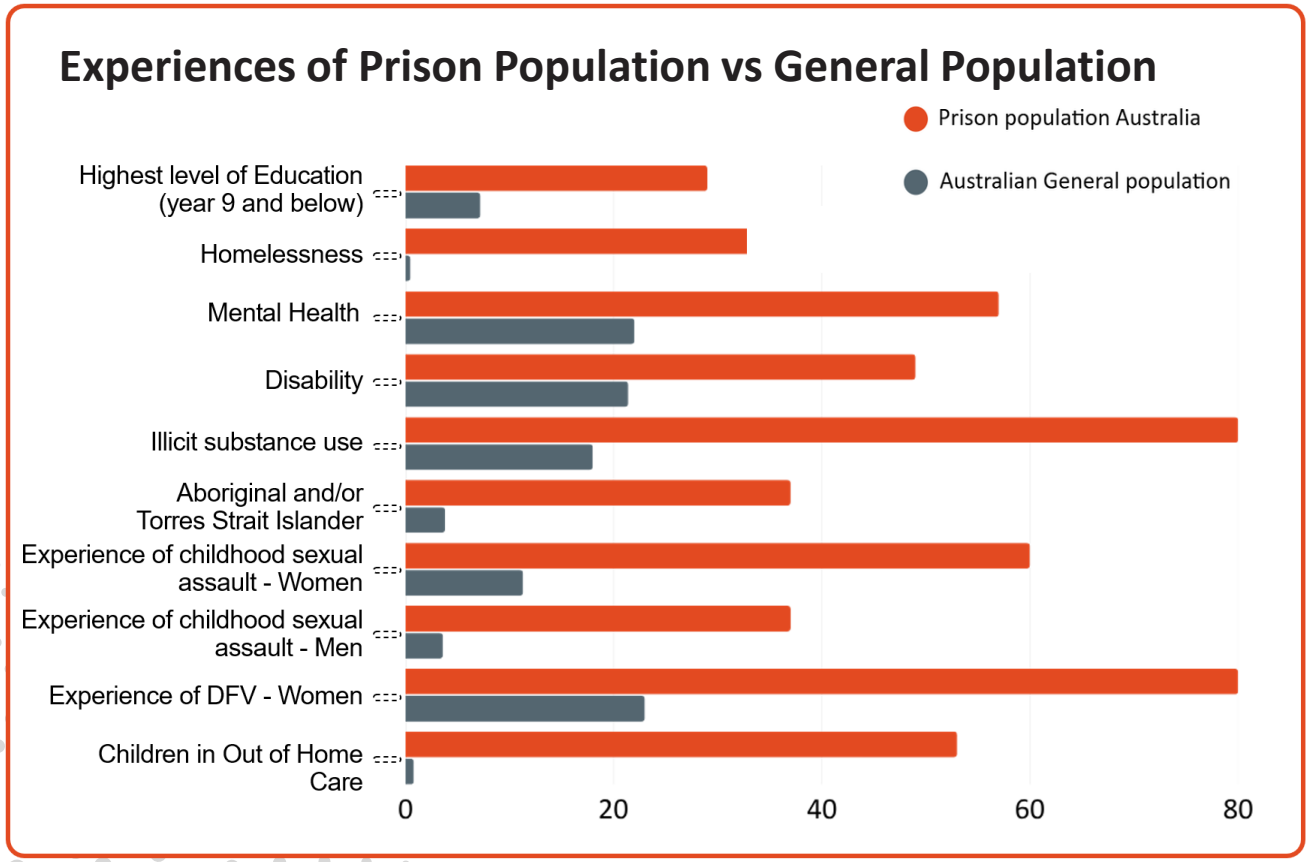
- **Reduces Reincarceration:** Breaks the cycle of release and re-arrest.
- **Improves individual and family wellbeing:** Connection to trauma-informed services
- **Improves Safety**: Builds safer communities by addressing social determinants of justice.
- **Saves Public Funds**: Diverts individuals from expensive prison system

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Marisa Moliterno She/Her **Dr. Stella Settumba Stolk** She/Her

Homelessness, a social determinant of justice

Prison is managing unmet need at the most vulnerable point



25% are homeless at prison entry

50,164 people in Australian Prisons

34% are homeless at prison discharge

0.5% of Australian population are homeless

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CRC RHSP Model

RHSP supports people exiting prison to secure housing, sustain tenancy, rebuild wellbeing, reduce re-incarceration.

HOUSING FIRST

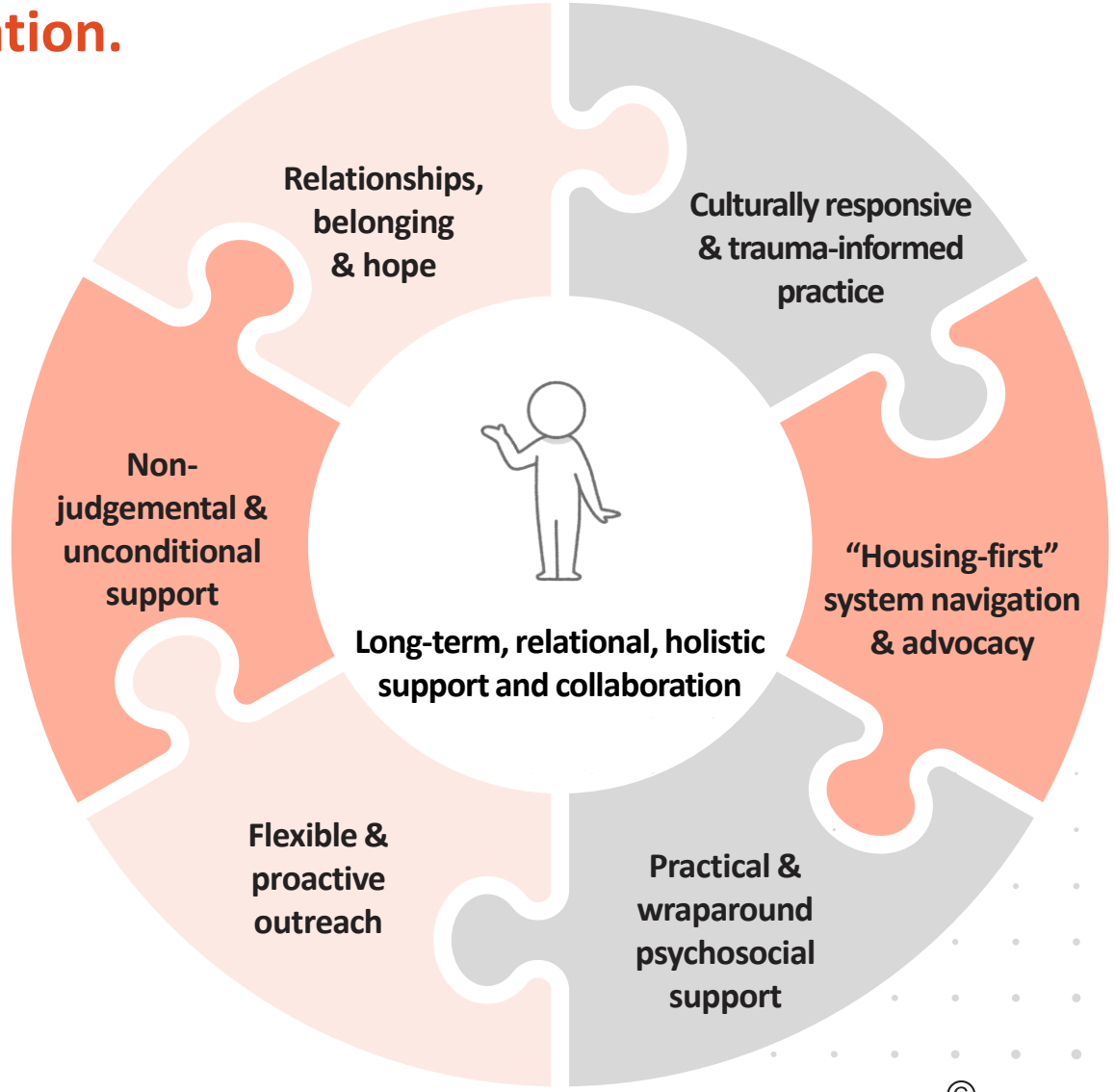
Support for people leaving prison who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

WRAP-AROUND SUPPORT

Holistic psychosocial support designed to strengthen wellbeing and reduce repeat homelessness and recidivism.

EMBEDDED DELIVERY

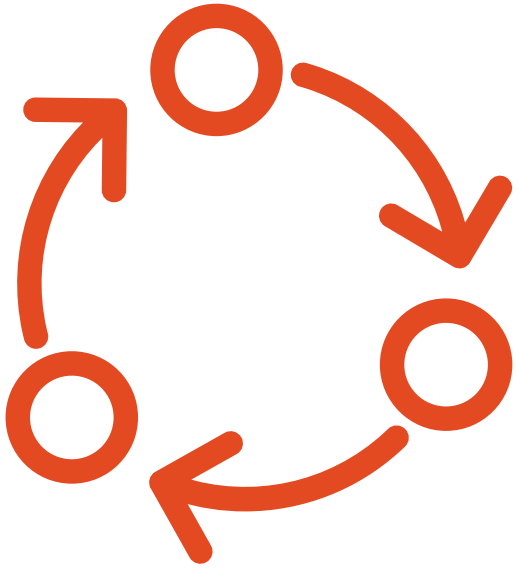
Two CRC workers are co-located with DCJ Housing teams across six NSW offices.



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RHSP Evaluation Methods



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About the RHSP Evaluation

Evaluation questions

Evaluation question:

'Did the RHSP reduce homelessness and improve wellbeing and re-incarceration outcomes amongst people exiting prison in NSW?'

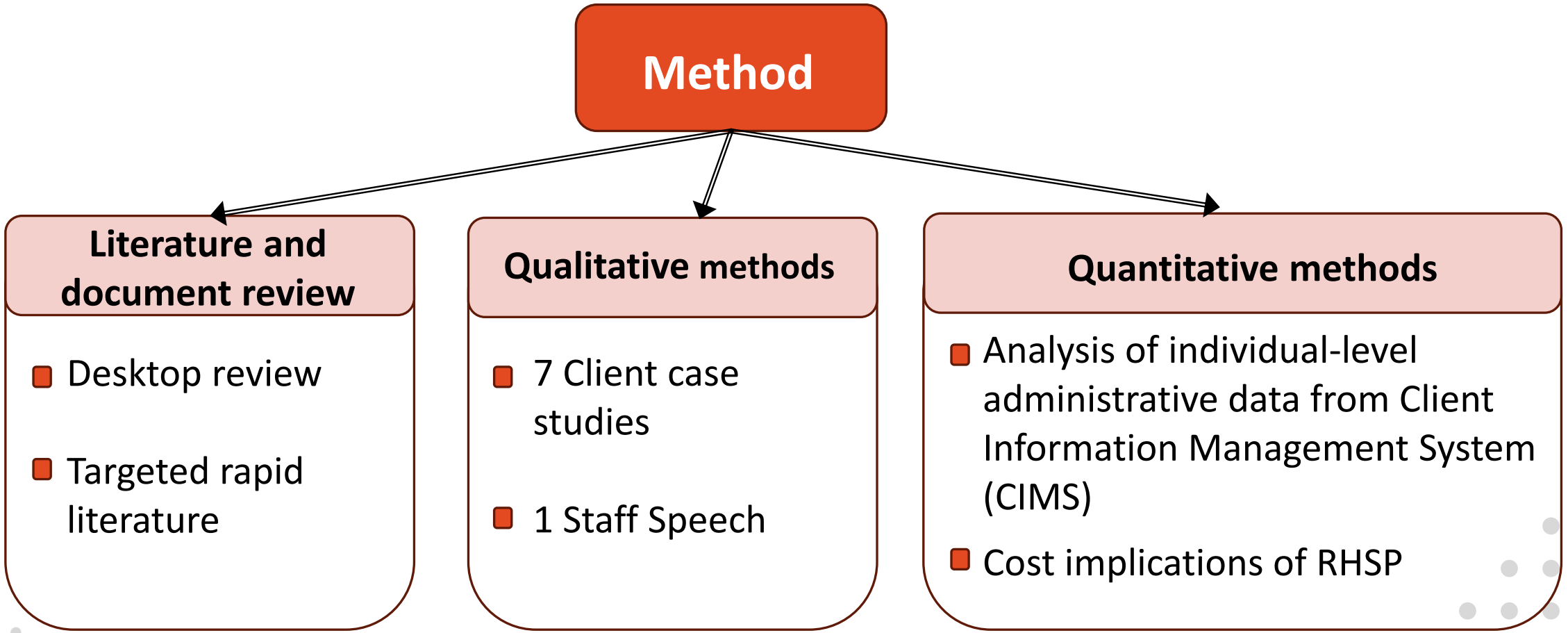
What are RHSP's **cost savings** to the criminal legal system?

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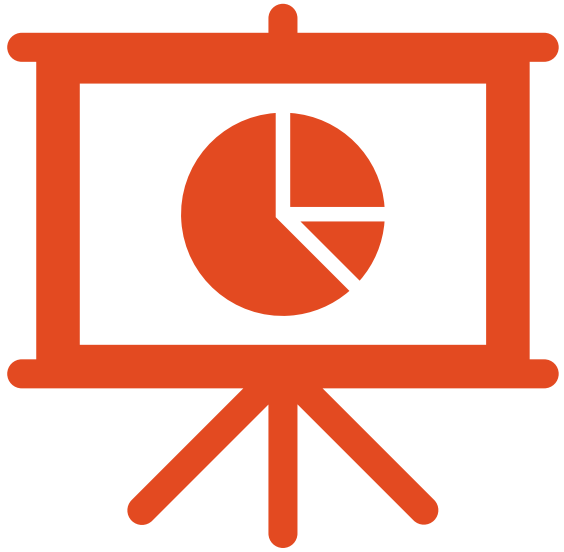
About the RHSP Evaluation

Evaluation methodology



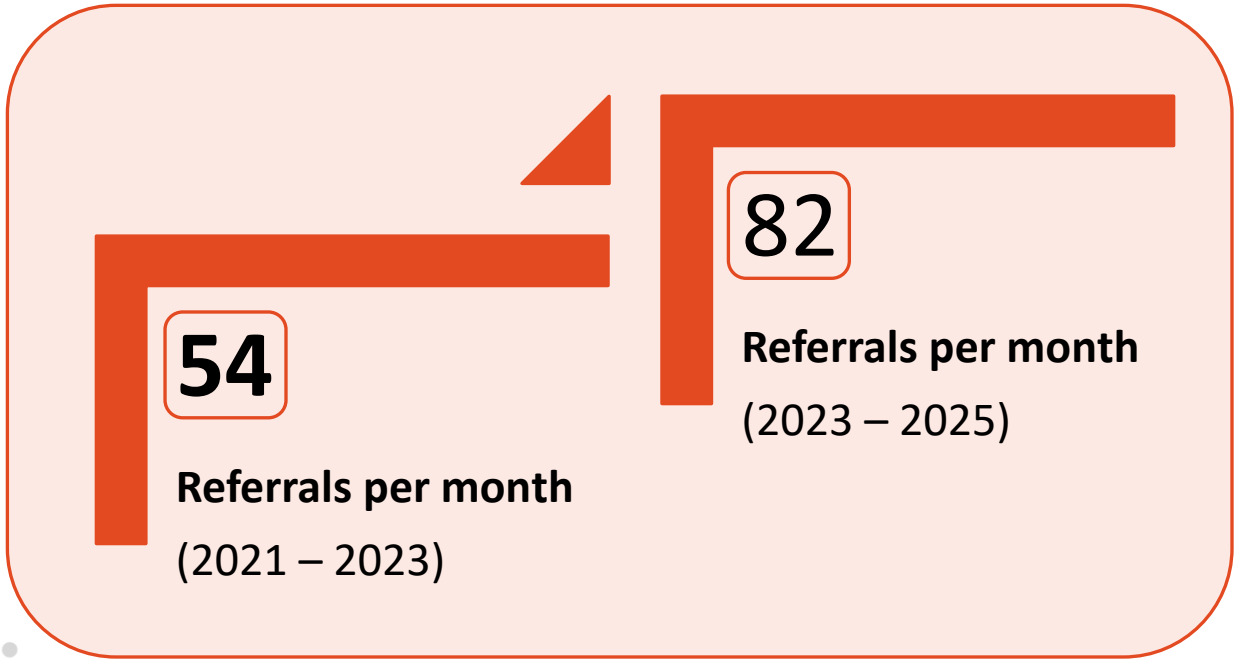
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Key Evaluation Findings



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Demand for the program



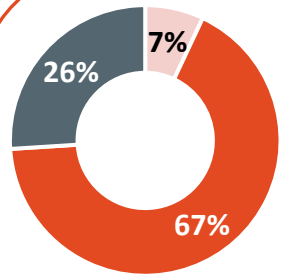
- 52% increase in average monthly referrals
- 71% unassisted referrals
- Primary reason for unassisted referrals was insufficient staff 49% in 2023 – 2025 and 61% in 2021 - 2023
- **RHSP is experiencing an overwhelming demand that far exceeds its current resources.**

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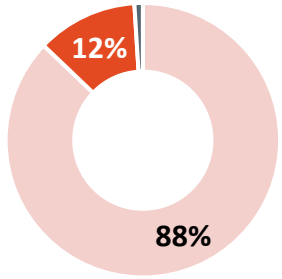
Client Demographics
(1 July 2023 – 30 June 2025)

529
RHSP clients,
574
support periods

44%
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander clients
(up from 36%)



Age
18-25 ■ 26-45 ■ 45+



Gender*
- Male
- Female
- Preferred not to say

Location
136 clients
Coniston (24%)

106 clients
Mount Druitt (19%)

77-88 clients
Other locations

73% had a **prior mental health diagnosis** (up from 65%).

Presenting tenure
87.5%
Homeless
12.5%
At risk of homelessness

Referral Timing
58%
Pre-release
42%
Post release

***0.2% of overall clients were recorded as 'prefer not to say' and none as being part of trans and gender diverse (TGD) communities, which is below the approximated average in Australia of 0.9% of adults 25+ and 2.7% of young people 16-24** (Higgins et al 2024). This underrepresentation is likely because questions like whether the client has a TGD history are not mandatory in CIMS, and as such this data was not recorded for most clients. More consistency in asking RHSP clients about TGD history will help acquire this needed data.

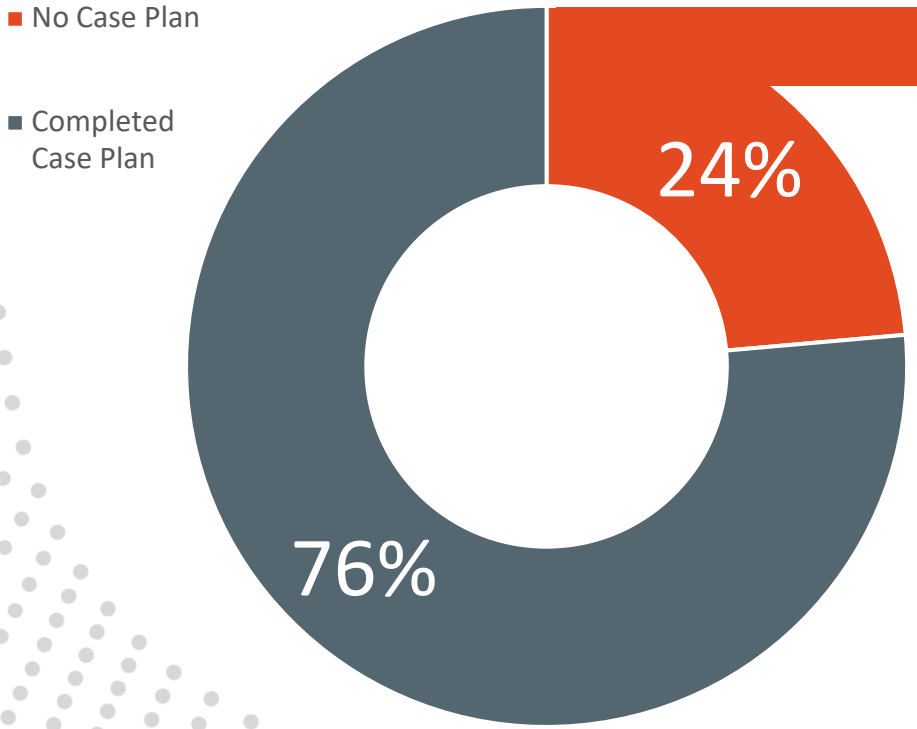
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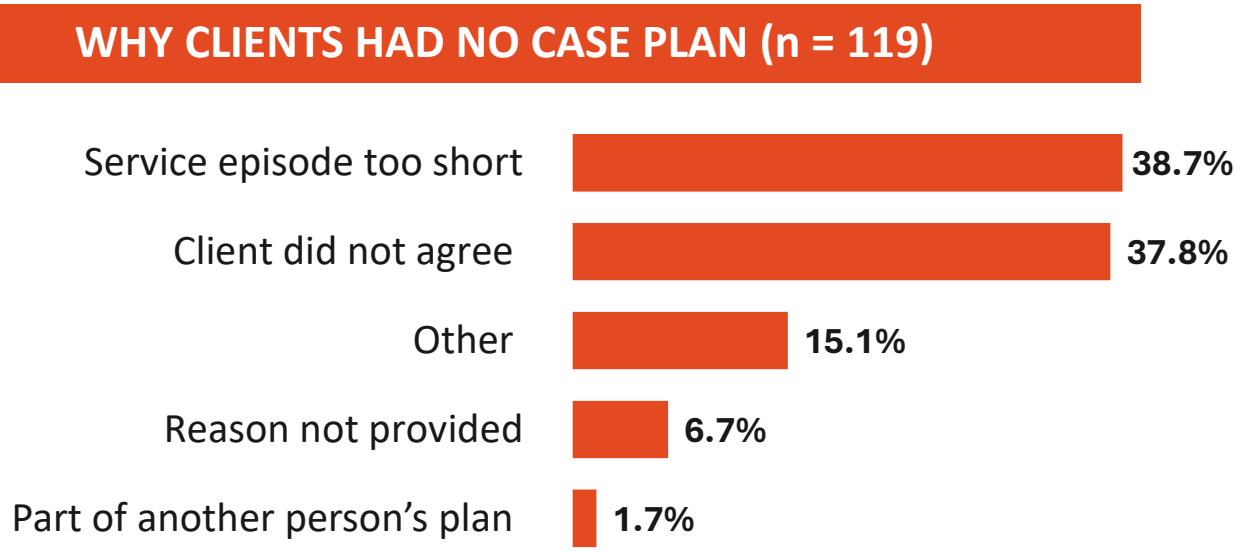
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Client engagement and wellbeing

CASE-PLAN STATUS AND REASONS CLIENTS HAD NO CASE PLAN

CASE-PLAN STATUS RECORDED (N = 574)



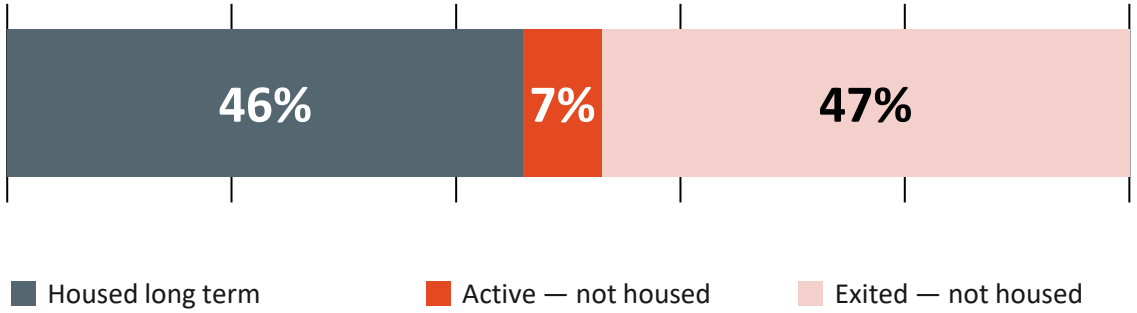


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Housing Outcomes

HOUSING STATUS AT PROGRAM REPORTING (N = 574)



Long-term housing was secured for nearly half of enrolled clients.

46% **housed long term**

Despite holding no housing stock, RHSP helped secure long-term housing for nearly half of participants.

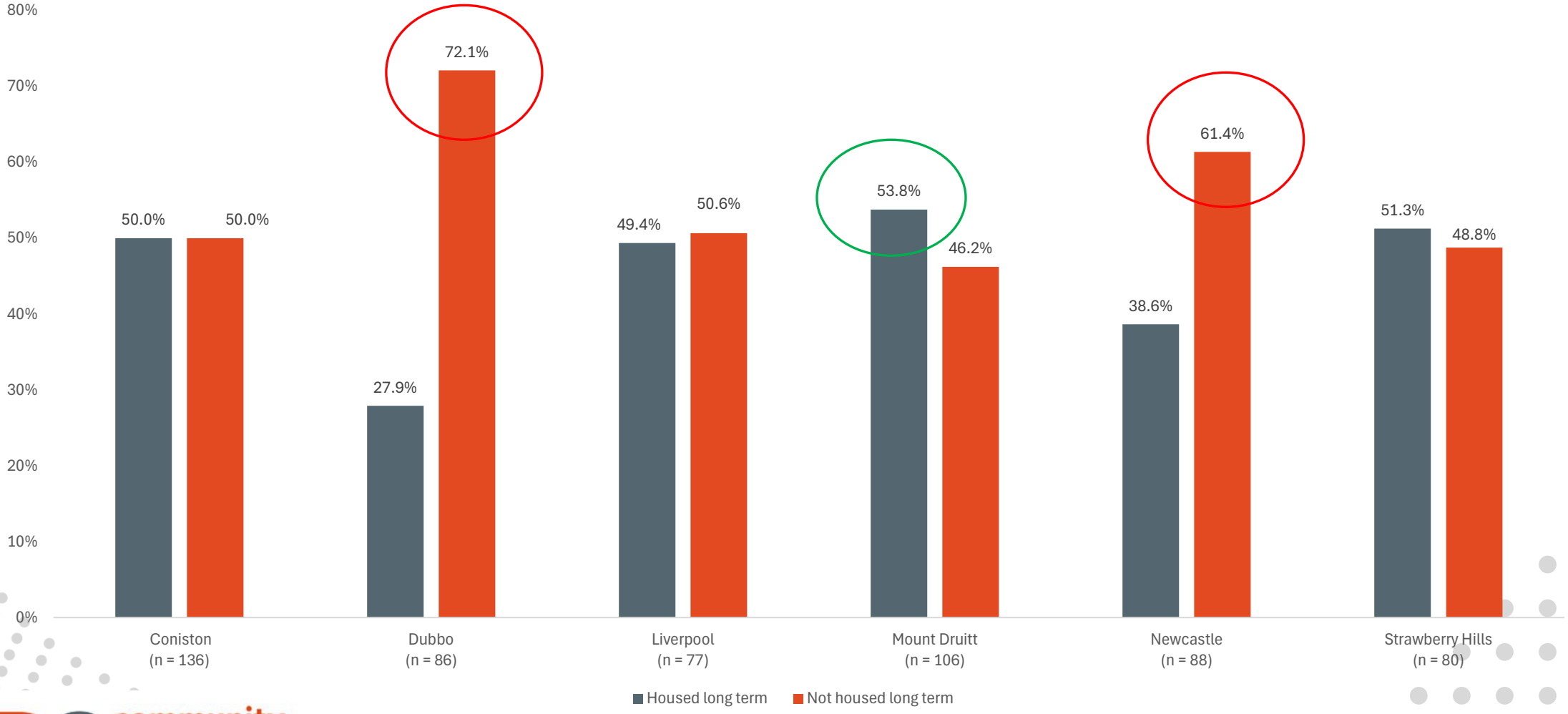
54% **not housed long term at reporting**

47% had exited; **7%** remained active.

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Client long term housing outcomes by location (N=573)



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Client Case Studies

Across every case study, a safe and stable home created the foundation for broader wellbeing.

STARTING POINT

Systemic barriers
High reincarceration risk, history of trauma, no stable housing and unmet health needs.

TURNING POINT

Walk alongside and Housing
Meet survival needs first, Housing support, navigate other system support.

ULTIMATE GOAL

Individual autonomy
Success may mean freedom from prison, family reconnection or community confidence.

CASE STUDY EVIDENCE

GERALD · DUBBO

A secure home supported stronger family ties, continued substance-use treatment and compliance with Community Corrections.

SHAWN · NEWCASTLE

Housing stability built his confidence to use public transport and participate in fishing, gardening and café visits.

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Source: RHSP client case studies

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Persistent casework turns housing into sustained wellbeing

Trusted caseworker relationships helped clients navigate fragmented housing, health and disability systems.

STAFF TESTIMONY

"The right care allows clients not just to stay housed, but to live with dignity and support."

Kirsty Trethowan · RHSP staff member · 2025 RHSP evaluation report

POLICY IMPLICATION

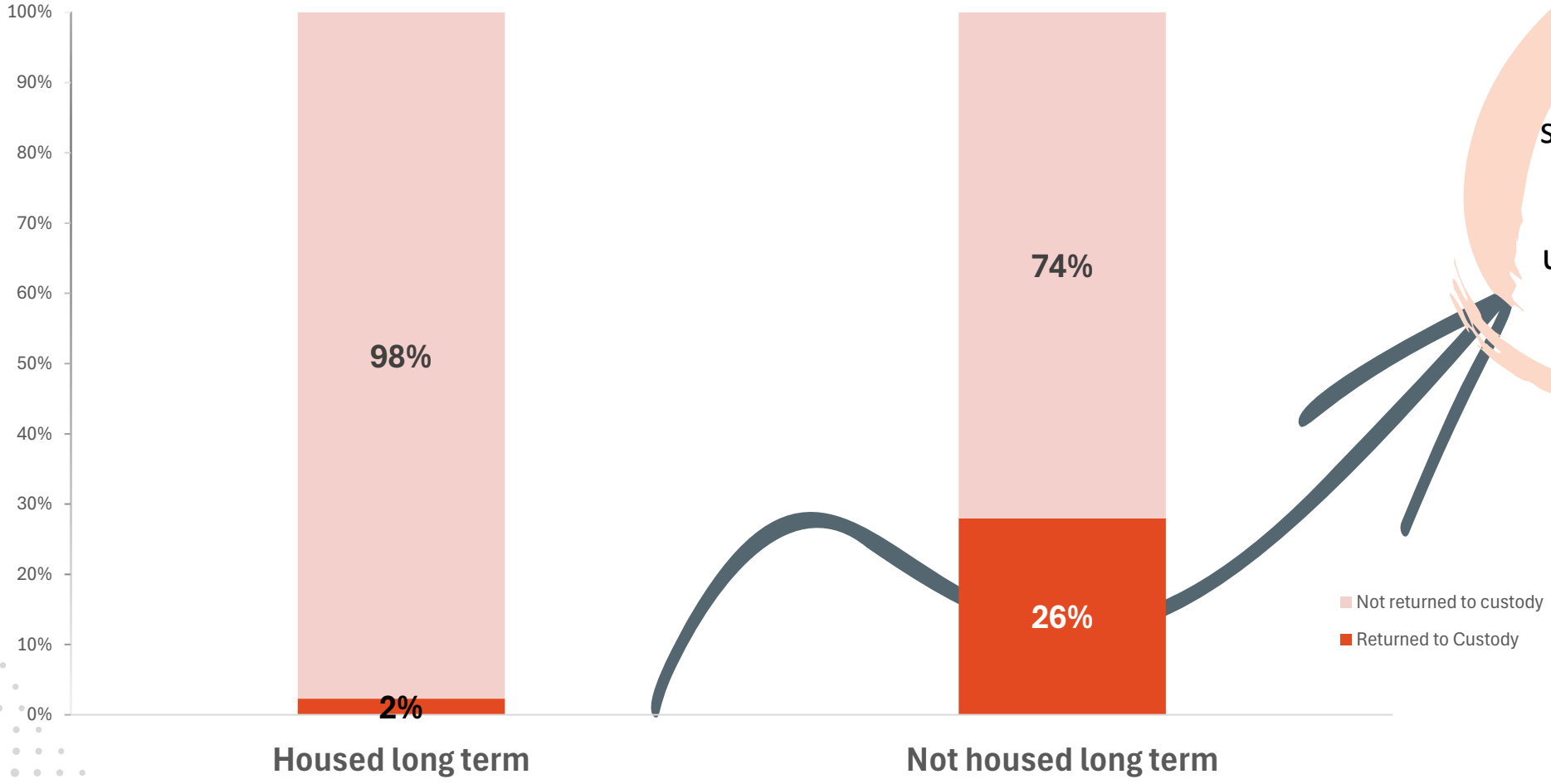
Sustained housing requires relational casework and cross-system coordination - not housing placement alone.

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Source: 2025 RHSP evaluation report

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Re-incarceration outcomes among clients housed and not housed long term (N = 574)

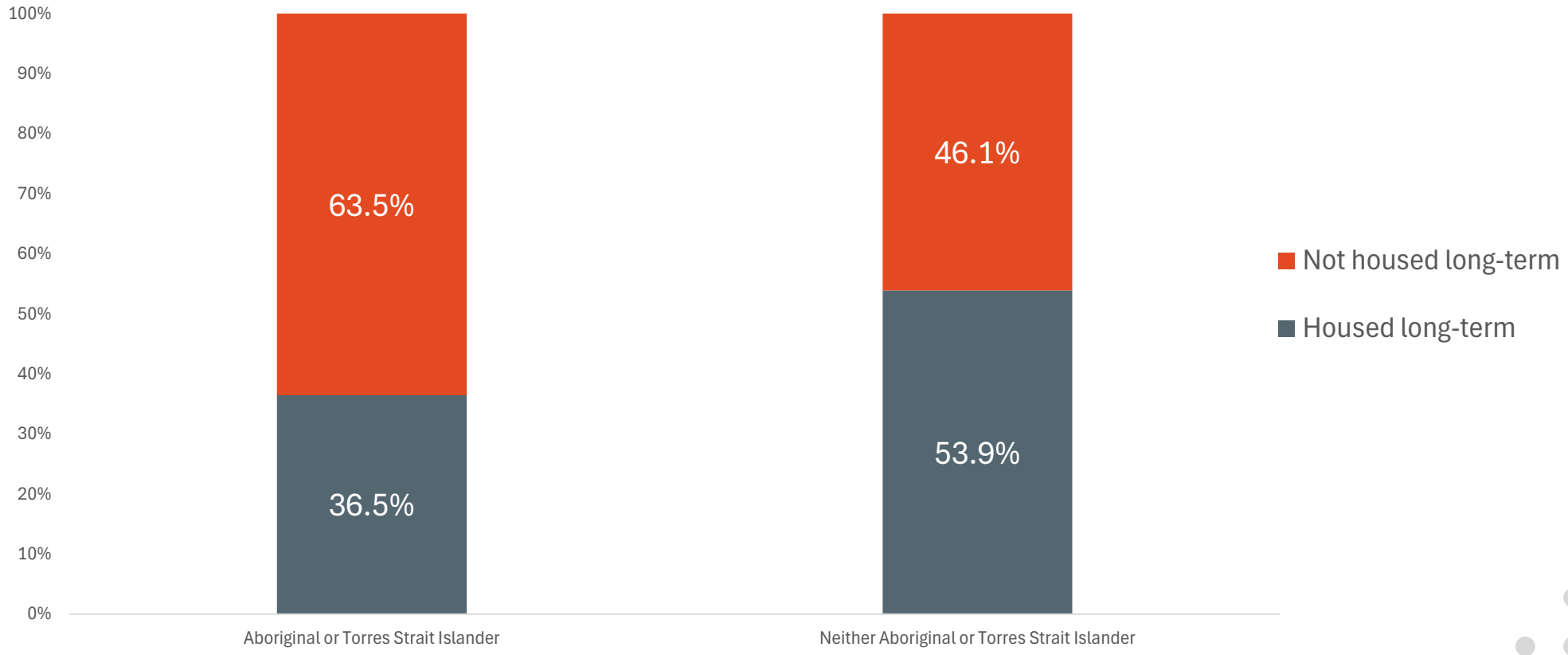


Just **2%** of people supported into housing through CRC's RHSP (compared to **26%** of unhoused) **returned to prison**.

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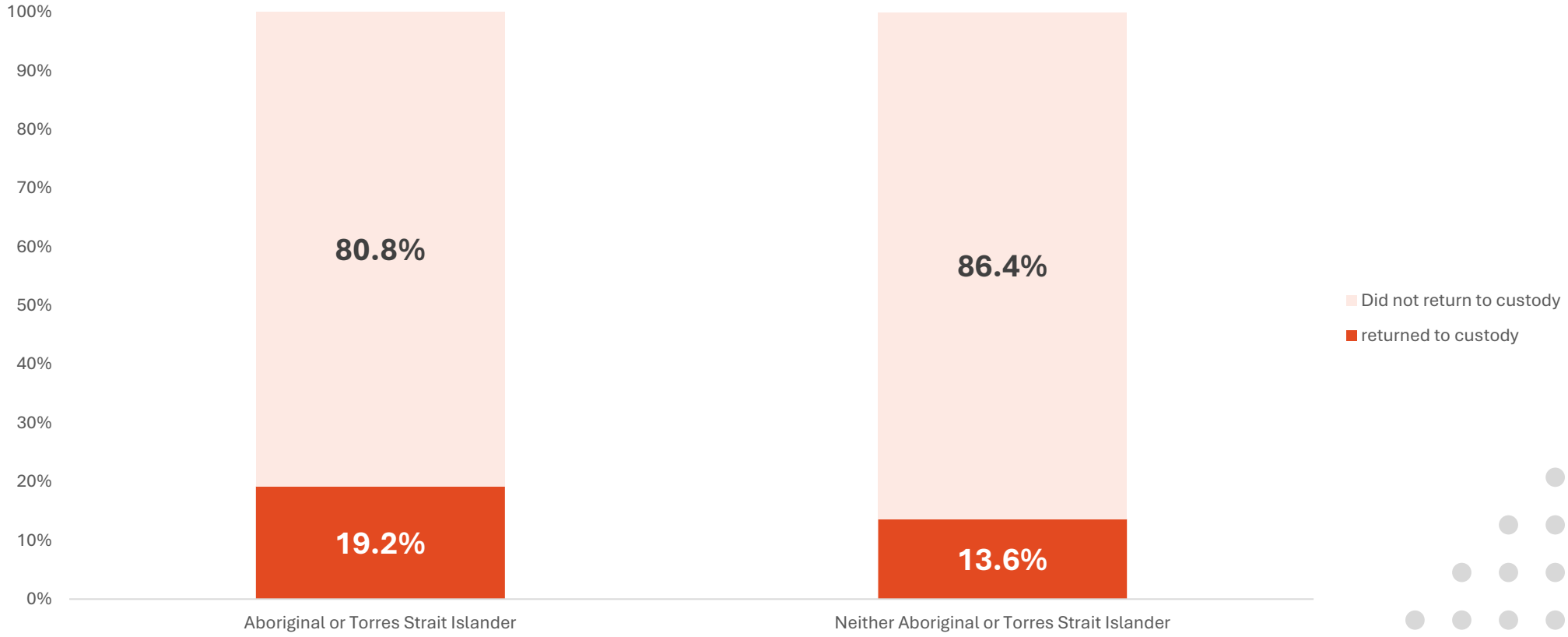
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First Nations People – Housing Outcomes (N=574)



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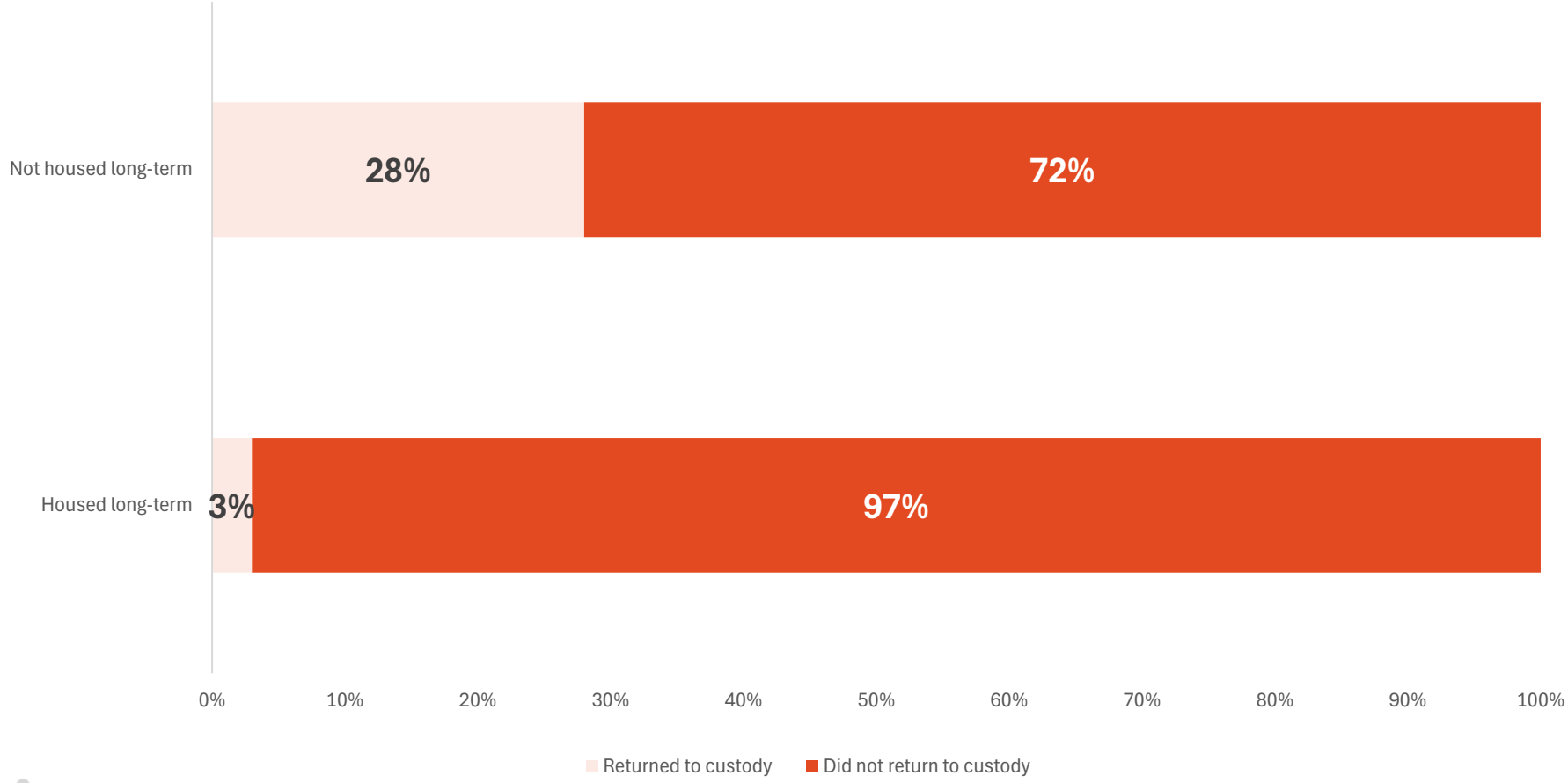
First Nations People – Re-incarceration Outcomes (N=574)



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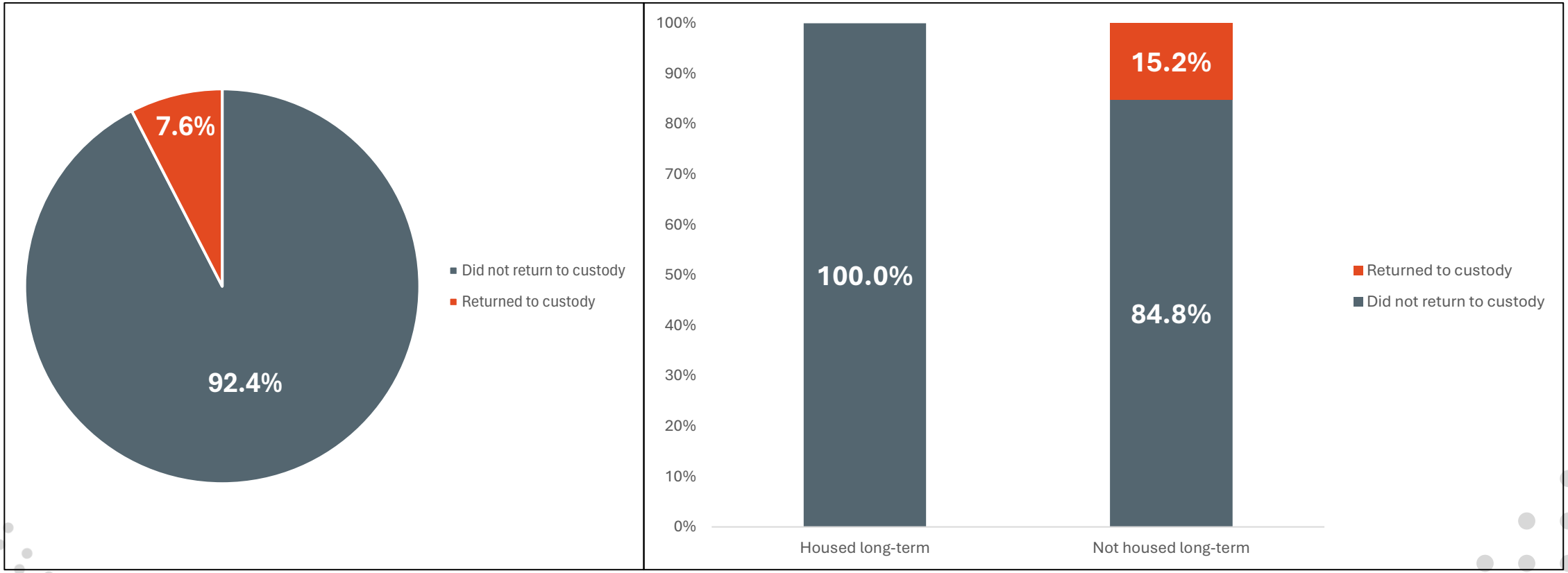
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Impact of long-term housing on reincarceration among First Nations RHSP clients (N=231)



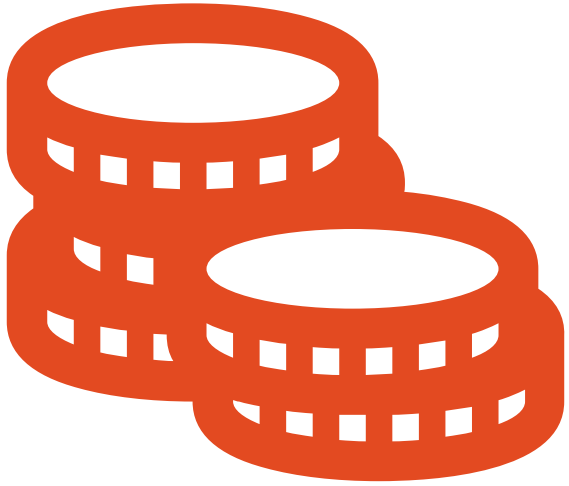
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Impact of housing on reincarceration - Females



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Cost Implications



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Cost-benefit Analysis

Measure	Long-term housing compared to rental assistance	Long-term housing compared to homelessness services
Net-benefit per individual (5 years post housing)	$6,424	$43,162
RHSP total savings per annual cohort 5 years post housing	$841,503	$5,654,277
Missed 5-year savings per annual cohort due to unassisted eligible individuals	$1,029,524	$6,917,641

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Evaluation Conclusions



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Conclusion

Stable housing with flexible relational outreach-based support:

- Keeps clients engaged
- Improves wellbeing
- Lowers re-incarceration
- Is cost-saving

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Acknowledgements

- RHSP Clients July 2023 – June 2025
- Clients whose case studies were included in the evaluation report
- RHSP Staff
- Kirsty Trethowan
- RHSP Program Managers – Kelly Parker and Regina Brady
- Alison Churchill, CRC CEO
- ARPU Staff - Rory Gillard, Marisa Moliterno, Angus Jack Mason, Stella Settumba Stolk
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- Department of Communities and Justice – RHSP Funding

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(02) 9288 8700

info@crcnsw.org.au

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Questions



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