

Pathways Home

NSW community housing's role delivering better outcomes for people exiting corrective services

Final Paper

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Executive Summary

This Report provides a snapshot of the complex relationships between public, not-for-profit and occasionally private organisations that help NSW people exit from prison with an aim to minimise both homelessness and re-offending.

Interest in finding solutions to what is a classic 'wicked problem' is shown through high response rates to e-Surveys, and ease of access to interviewees - including FACS and Corrective Services NSW.

NSW's approach to housing ex-prisoners is well known by practitioners to be fragmented, variable between FACS districts and still bedding down after a period of rapid change. However, an unexpected result of this research is that on-the-ground responses - at least in several regions - work reasonably well. This might be due to goodwill of key individuals as much as carefully planned system design.

The state's community housing providers are already deeply embedded in homelessness networks, as service providers or partners. Their involvement and understanding of the issues with housing ex-prisoners is high. This provides a strong platform going forward, important given the increasing outsourcing of social housing to the community housing sector.

While better coordination between housing providers and corrective services is a worthy goal, it might best happen at local level. Community housing providers should leverage their natural advantage as 'community anchors' - relatively well resourced local actors who can help

coordinate various support agencies and make change happen.

This Report highlights a clear anomaly that NSW has only one third the numbers of dedicated housing units for ex-prisoners than South Australia - a state with one fifth the population. This needs to be corrected. Greater progress might be achieved by community housing aligning with FACS than Corrective Services NSW, despite both branches of Government benefitting.

While there are promising private sector led initiatives, with a social impact bond and innovation at private jails, Corrective Services NSW retain a traditional approach to prisoner rehabilitation. Support ends after only a few months' following prison exit, and they do not support a 'housing first' approach.

While there are no easy answers to the issues raised in this Report, neither are the problems insurmountable. Community housing providers and their peak body, working collaboratively with other sectors, can help influence Government. Smaller local initiatives, backed by published evaluations, could make an impact.

Two main ways forward are proposed:

- Enhanced sector coordination, information sharing and research - based on a solid partnership between the Federation and Homelessness NSW
- Two practical demonstration projects in 2018 based on changes brought by the Social Housing Management Transfers

Instead of perpetuating the cycle between imprisonment and homelessness, we need to give people pathways home.

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Abbreviations and Glossary

Accord: Housing and Human Services Accord, signed in 2007 between NSW government agencies to help people in social housing with complex needs

Bail: a commitment made to secure the temporary release of a person arrested, held in custody and suspected of a crime

BASP: Bail Accommodation Support Program - a 20 bed bail accommodation unit delivered by Anglicare in SA

Community housing: social housing managed by not-for-profit organisations

CRA: Commonwealth Rent Assistance - benefit payment to eligible lower income residents in private and community housing

CRC: Community Restorative Centre - a NSW not-for-profit organisation supporting people leaving prison and their families

Crisis accommodation: short term shelter for normally for people who are or are at risk of homelessness

ERS: Extended Reintegration Service - support for ex-offenders with intellectual disabilities and/or mental illness, a replacement for PSI

e-Survey: electronic survey

FACS: NSW Department of Family and Community Services

Federation: NSW Federation of Housing Associations - the NSW peak body for community housing

FPI: Funded Partnerships Initiative - grants to NSW non-for-profits from Correctional

Services NSW to support high risk offenders and reduce reoffending

Going Home Staying Home (GSHS): policy and funding changes to the delivery of SHS services in NSW, 2014

Homelessness: where people do not have shelter, live in an inadequate dwelling or do not have secure or longer-term tenure

Housing first: provision of long term housing to chronically homeless people, allowing a platform for other support services to be provided

Housing stress: where a household is paying more than 30% of total household income on housing costs

IHEAAS: Integrated Housing Exits Alternative Accommodation and Support program - support for SA clients not able to secure accommodation under IHEP

IHEP: Integrated Housing Exits Program - housing and support for 60 SA adult ex-prisoners and 20 young people (under 25)

NAHA: National Affordable Housing Agreement between the Commonwealth and States to co-fund social housing

NDIS: National Disability Insurance Scheme

NHHA: National Housing and Homelessness Agreement - Commonwealth and States agreement planned to replace NAHA and NPAH from 2018-19 onwards

NPAH: National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness, between the Commonwealth and States, to co-fund homeless services

NRAS: National Rental Affordability Scheme (2009-14) a subsidy for constructing new affordable rental housing, co-funded by the Commonwealth and States

NRSCH: National Regulatory System for Community Housing - the regulatory system for community housing providers in all jurisdictions except Victoria and WA

NT: Northern Territory

OARS: The Offenders Aid and Rehabilitation Services. A not-for-profit SHS agency in SA providing OARS Community Transitions to support ex-prisoners

OnTRACC (Transition Reintegration and Community Cohesion): a NSW social impact bond launched in 2016 to reduce reoffending and re-incarceration

Parole: provisional release of a prisoner prior to completion of their maximum sentence. Parolees are still considered to be serving their sentence, and can be returned to prison if they break their parole conditions

PPP: public private (and often non-for-profit) partnership

PSI: Parolee Support Initiative (2008-14) funded by Corrective Services NSW and delivered by CRC to support offenders with intellectual disabilities and/or mental illness. Replaced by ERS

Public housing: social housing owned and managed by a Government agency

Remand: detention of a person in custody who has been arrested, prior to trial

Renewal SA: the SA Government agency coordinating urban development, social housing assets and community housing funding and policy

SA: South Australia

SAHF: NSW Social and Affordable Housing Fund, to deliver new housing

SDA: Specialist Disability Accommodation program, part of the NDIS initiative

SHS: Specialist Homelessness Services: not-for-profit organisations providing support for people experiencing homelessness. Funded under the NPAH

Social housing: rental housing provided at below market rent levels to eligible applicants, managed either by a Government agency (public housing) a not-for-profit organisation (community housing)

SSF: Service Support Fund - funding for SHS providers unsuccessful in GHSH, 2014 onwards

TA: Temporary Accommodation - FACS funded emergency housing for up to 28 days, usually in motels

Tier 1 etc: NRSCH classification of community housing providers. Tier 1 are large and develop at scale, Tier 2 medium sized with some development capacity and Tier 3 smaller and more diverse activities

Transitional housing: accommodation linked to support for people who are or at risk of homelessness

WA: Western Australia

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1 Introduction

1.1 Project overview

In May 2017 the NSW peak body for community housing, supported by the State's homelessness peak, commissioned Housing Action Network to establish options for community housing providers to provide secure, sustainable accommodation for people exiting the prison system.

The approach builds on an earlier similar South Australian (SA) research project (Gilmour & Stott, 2016). This involved 2 electronic surveys (e-Surveys) and 26 interviews, including NSW respondents such as Professor Eileen Baldry at UNSW. Some background material from the SA research has been used in this Report.

Project objectives

The five project aims are to:

- Detail the organisations and Government agencies involved in ex-prisoner housing and support, and their inter-relationships. This will build a knowledge bank to assist future reviews and more detailed evaluations
- Identify examples of good practice in NSW and other jurisdictions
- Use stakeholder input to assess the strengths and weaknesses of current NSW approaches, and gather ideas for change and innovation
- Suggest ways the community housing sector can assist further, particularly linked with up-coming social housing management transfers
- Encourage future debate and action

1.2 Research method

While a brief environmental scan of the national and international research literature was undertaken, the main project focus is to understand what works best in delivering effective housing and support options.

The 33 individuals from 26 organisations contacted for this research in mid-2017 are listed in an attachment. They included people from 6 community housing providers, 10 Specialist Homelessness Service (SHS) organisations and 3 Government agencies.

Two e-Surveys were undertaken of:

- All 27 Tier 1 and 2 community housing providers, with a 93% response rate. Two specialist Tier 2 providers were included in the SHS survey
- 29 SHS providers suggested by Homelessness NSW as supporting ex-prisoners, with an 83% response rate

The initial report was updated in early 2018.

Limitations

The project is of modest scale, exploring a topic where little information is publicly available. Housing and support options for ex-prisoners have rarely been evaluated, and little data is published.

While the e-Surveys had a very high response rate, only selected SHS providers were approached. Reliance has been placed on interviews and it was often not possible to independently verify statements made.

The opinions expressed in this Report are of the author, not necessarily the interviewees and survey respondents.

2 Housing, Homelessness and Crime

This Report spans the traditionally siloed areas of social housing, homelessness support and corrective services. These are administered by different Government agencies, and often staffed by people working in separate career domains who approach issues such as reducing re-offending from different viewpoints.

2.1 Re-accessing the housing system

Ex-prisoner housing needs are best understood in the context of an individual's transition through their life in the broader housing system. Everyone has a *housing career* that might span different tenure types along a *housing continuum*. Housing choices will be shaped by age, family circumstances, income, gender, disability and disadvantage (Beer & Faulkner, 2008).

Many people encountering the criminal justice system face a variety of disadvantages and are more likely to experience discontinuous housing careers.

The housing continuum

The continuum is a conceptual map of housing options from crisis accommodation through social housing, private rentals to home ownership. A well-functioning continuum needs enough properties in all tenures to accommodate demand, and for transitions between options to be smooth.

There are significant problems with how Australia's housing continuum is working. A reported 36% of households were at risk of homelessness at the time of public housing

allocation, and 196,000 households on the social housing waiting list in June 2016 (AIHW, 2017a). Homeownership rates are falling, and private rentals offer little long-term security and are increasingly unaffordable.

Most transitions into and out of prison are thought to be from/to homelessness and social rentals. Only a minority of transitions are into/out of private rental or home ownership. Detailed data on housing pathways for ex-prisoners is lacking, so reliance has to be placed on anecdotal comment and earlier case study research by Professor Baldry at UNSW.

People exiting prison face considerable competition for housing in a supply-constrained market, coupled with discrimination and stigmatisation.

Other issues in NSW making an impact include Sydney being one of the world's least affordable cities. Central Sydney - a popular destination for ex-offenders - has lost most existing affordable housing due to gentrification, together with social housing displacement at Millers Point.

Anecdotally, some people re-offend to benefit from stable accommodation, food and camaraderie. High levels of re-offending indicate prison has become a regular feature on the housing careers of some individuals.

Housing careers

The most comprehensive survey on the housing careers of NSW and Victorian ex-offenders is now a number of years out of date (Baldry et al., 2003). However, the

findings are still likely to reveal many current general issues and trends.

The 2003 research was based on interviewing before release, and 3, 6 and 9 months after release, 145 NSW and 93 Victorian prisoners to follow their housing careers. Key findings included:

- Nine months after release, 34% had been re-incarcerated. This figure is likely conservative as it will not capture people in out-of-state prisons
- Those with supportive family, or linked to an agency with helpful housing and other post-release support, were more likely to secure stable housing and employment
- Before imprisonment, 18% of the sample were homeless, rising to 21% after release. However, many who did not acknowledge they were homeless were actually homeless (e.g. couch surfing) or were moving in and out of homelessness.
- While 68% of Australian households own their own home, only 24% of the research sample did prior to entering prison, and only 21.4% post-release
- Most existing prisoners had not arranged accommodation upon release but hoped they could stay with family or friends, or move straight into public housing. Only 16% expected to find themselves homeless. The reality 9 months after release was worse than most participants expected
- The number of times a survey participant moved house after release was the factor most predictive of re-incarceration. Almost half the survey became transient after release
- Most surveyed respondents came from and went back to disadvantaged

suburbs and towns. In NSW these were concentrated in very few areas

The housing careers of people who have been in prison therefore varies considerably to the wider population both before and after imprisonment. Their housing careers are characterised by multiple transitions, tenure insecurity, homelessness and often dislocation with family members and friends.

2.2 Housing transition barriers

There are a variety of other barriers to re-entering the housing system for ex-prisoners other than a lack of appropriate and affordable housing supply:

- Exiting prisoners will usually be unemployed, and face barriers to re-entering the labour force and sustaining stable employment
- Income insecurity is a problem until Centrelink benefit payments received
- Welfare benefits are low, especially for single people on Newstart, reducing housing options. Many prisoners will be single, in part through relationship and family breakdown while incarcerated
- Few personal possessions while in custody and uncertainty of security of their home contents while in jail. This can lead to a lack of essential household items - white goods, bedding, furniture - upon exit from prison
- Inability to locate identity and other documents needed for a tenancy
- General lack of skills accessing the housing system and managing day-to-day housing issues such as applications, paying rent, utility payments and neighbour disputes
- Limited support services to help people overcoming substance abuse, mental health and family violence issues

- People on remand are often released at short notice which gives little time to arrange housing
- Prisoners incarcerated for short periods may not have had access to support services easing exit from prison

Tenure specific issues

In addition to the above issues, there are also challenges related to specific tenures:

- **Private rental**
 - Prejudice and discrimination by landlords and real estate agents. As noted by an ex-prisoner:
'Employers and Real Estate Agents discriminate against people with a prison sentence. It's impossible to get a job or a private rental, so the only other option is to go to a homelessness service' (Parity, 2017).
 - Intense competition from other rental applicants
 - Lack of a strong (or any) tenancy history and references
 - Lack of up-to-date knowledge of local property markets and prices, and an inability to access the Internet in prison for prior research
 - The need for a deposit, coupled with lack of familiarity with Government private rental products
 - Limited IT skills, making it harder to access real estate websites
- **Social rental**
 - Current social housing applications might be closed if people do not receive correspondence in prison and indicate to remain on the list
 - Limited access to social housing advice while in prison: housing officers are rarely allowed in jails

- Problems making Pathways applications due to short times allowed for phone calls from prisons, and being kept on-hold if lines busy
- Inability to apply on line for Pathways as Internet access not permitted
- Negative former social housing tenant classifications, for anti-social behaviour or unpaid rent. These details can be hard to obtain from within prison
- Strong competition for limited places from high needs applicants, including others facing homelessness
- Confusion over the split of social housing between public and community housing providers

Many of the above issues also impact a range of higher needs people trying to enter the housing system and sustain tenancies.

Client specific issues

While many people face challenges leaving prison and securing housing, problems are greatest for certain groups. Baldry et al. (2003) identified these as indigenous women and single mothers with children.

- **Indigenous people**
Aboriginal people are significantly over-represented in prison, with very high suicide rates - especially amongst young people. Incarceration can significantly disrupt connection to country.
- **Indigenous women**
Of women entering prison, 30% are Indigenous. This group is more likely to face socio-economic disadvantage and have prior experiences of homelessness, mental illness, domestic violence, and drug and alcohol addiction. They are also more likely to

have fines, debt and face discrimination in private rentals (DVSM, 2016).

Many Aboriginal women are multiple short term re-offenders and cycle into and out of jail. This limits their ability to accumulate goods, or community connection.

Accessing and re-accessing the social housing system can be a problem for Indigenous women, especially those with negative tenant classifications. Only 12% exiting prison in a 2015 survey believed they had access to stable housing on release (LANSW, 2015: p.4).

Supporting Aboriginal people back into the community can be challenging. In some cases, an Aboriginal community may have concerns about an offender returning, making it hard to identify an alternative location with accommodation and support, especially in regional and remote areas of NSW.

- **Female prisoners, especially single mothers with children**

Women in prison tend to be committed for less serious, less violent offences than men - but more often. Financial problems are more likely to be a cause of offending, and debts an issue on release. Pre-release support is often not gender appropriate (Holland, 2017).

Many single women parents face problems securing housing for themselves and their children. Housing debts, partner problems, social isolation and poverty are significant issues.

The Women's Justice Network is an organisation mentoring women and girls in the criminal justice system. Funded by FACS to mentor 50 clients, the Network adopts a person centric approach. An interviewee advised that only 7 of 400 people mentored by the Network have returned back to prison.

2.3 Homelessness and the criminal justice system

While many people entering prison have experienced homelessness, and still more exit to homelessness, the relationship between crime and stable housing is complex and contested.

Formerly homeless people exiting the correctional services system are more likely to experience unemployment, lower incomes, discrimination and housing difficulties. Many people being released from prison do not have suitable accommodation to go to, and pre-release information and support in securing accommodation is often inadequate.

AIHW data shows 3% of all SHS clients in 2016-17 had exited a custodial setting. The annual increase has been 6% per year since 2011-12, with the rate for women (+10%) increasing faster than for men (+5%). Only 35% of ex-prisoners in need of short term or emergency accommodation were provided with it (AIHW, 2017b).

Without proper support, releasing ex-prisoners into an environment with the same unresolved housing and social problems they faced before they were sentenced can lead to re-offending. This creates a cycle of imprisonment and release, which is costly in social and economic terms.

Accommodation and re-offending

There is some evidence that post-release prisoner support that includes an accommodation component can help reduce re-offending and reduce the severity of future offences (Willis, 2016; Grows et al., 2016)

Although there is generally understood to be a link between homelessness and offending, there is no clear evidence of a *causal* link between providing stable accommodation

and reducing re-offending (O'Leary, 2013). In part this is due to the difficulty of isolating the impact of accommodation from other factors.

Homeless people, including those in correctional facilities, are much more likely than the general population to experience mental health problems and drug and alcohol misuse. As Baldry (2014) noted, it is very difficult to disentangle criminal behaviour, homelessness, poverty and mental and cognitive impairment.

Lack of research limits understanding of the complex relationships between housing, homelessness and re-offending. Some studies are methodologically flawed, and few consistent findings evident (Growth et al., 2016). Transparency is also a problem as most evaluations commissioned by NSW Government over the last decade on reducing re-offending have not been published.

Differing approaches

Stakeholder input gathered for this Report confirms divergent views on links between housing and re-offending. These can be characterised as two archetypes:

- **Criminogenic drivers**

Many people working in the criminal justice system see the key to addressing re-offending as targeting risk factors such as anti-social attitudes, substance abuse etc. Across Australia nearly all corrective services departments use the 'what works' approach. This aims to prevent re-offending through the principles of risk, needs and responsivity.

Community Services NSW considers there is worldwide consensus on the 'what works' approaches and say they 'use evidence based services to reduce re-offending and protect the community from harm' (CSNSW, 2017b: p.4).

'What works' focuses on those at highest risk of reoffending, with interventions while in prison and soon after: 'the period immediately after release from custody is the time when most re-offending occurs and when support should be targeted to achieve the best results'. The NSW time period adopted is 3 months

While Corrective Services NSW acknowledge housing is a factor in reducing re-offending, it is seen as one of many issues and low in priority. The focus is on the 3 months post-release, not longer term, and housing is not their responsibility (CSNSW, 2017b).

- **Housing first**

Interviews undertaken for this Report indicated a strong support in the homelessness and social housing sectors for 'housing first' approaches.

The general principle of 'housing first' is that chronic homelessness is best addressed by providing accommodation first, then offering ongoing support. Traditional approaches require people to seek treatment for issues such as substance abuse first then 'staircase' along the housing continuum from crisis to permanent housing.

'Housing first' emerged in the US in the late 1980s. By the 2000s it has been adopted in Britain, Canada, France, Denmark and other countries.

The term 'housing first' has contested and varied meanings. While intended to offer permanent housing to homeless people, it is often used in connection with housing that is 'not short term'. For example, South Australian Government's New Foundations housing program is self-described as 'housing first' although

accommodation is only for 12 months (see Section 4.5 below).

This Report uses the more general definition of housing first as offering 'not short term' housing. This is based on way most research respondents for this Report used the term.

Housing first has been supported by research studies in the US, Canada, England and Scotland. The evidence base is far stronger than for any other intervention targeting homelessness. However, it is not a panacea, rather a set of 'core components' that demonstrate positive housing outcomes.

In Australia, housing first featured in the NSW Homelessness Action Plan 2009-14, resulting in initiatives such as Platform 70 and Common Ground. Also, Victoria's 2016 Rapid Housing Assistance Program, Government funded delivered by community housing provider Launch Housing

The 2009 NSW Homelessness Action Plan's Targeted Housing and Support Service, which used housing first approaches, was evaluated in 2013. Researchers noted a reduction in homelessness and 'indications of its effectiveness in reducing risks associated with re-offending in clients assessed as medium to high risk of re-offending' (West et al., 2013: p.9)

In 2015 an independent university evaluation of Brisbane Common Ground - an NPAH housing first initiative - found 89% of the chronically homeless people housed successfully sustained their tenancies (Parsell et al., 2015: p.82). they also experienced improved health, employment and lifestyle choices.

Housing first is currently not promoted by NSW Government, either through Corrective Services NSW or FACS.

Analysis

Criminogenic and housing first approaches are archetypes, not comprehensive stand-alone solutions. They should not be seen as two mutually exclusive alternatives, and in some jurisdictions are delivered hand-in-hand with each other.

In practice stable housing is not necessarily a predictor of reduced offending and alone is insufficient; access to suitable housing needs to be linked with support services tailored to criminogenic factors (Fontaine & Biess, 2012)

Willis (2016) agrees with O'Leary's earlier findings that transitional and housing support services have the *potential* to reduce reoffending and therefore be of benefit to clients, the community and the taxpayer through reduced costs. Willis notes that while supported housing can be expensive, it will be cheaper and less capital intensive than keeping people in prison.

3 The NSW Prison System

The relevant NSW Government agency - *Corrective Services NSW* - has a broad range of responsibilities across prisons, community corrections, rehabilitation services and prison industries. This Report focuses only on adults:

- On remand - in custody awaiting trial
- In custody - after sentencing
- On parole - convicted prisoners serving the last part of their sentence in the community

The first two above categories are dealt with through the prison system, the third through community corrections. People subject to Community Service Orders are not covered in this Report, nor are people aged 10 to 18 - and occasionally up to 21 - who are the responsibility of *Juvenile Justice NSW*.

The term *prison* is used for simplicity in this Report, though 'correctional facility' is favoured by Corrective Services NSW.

3.1 Prisoner numbers

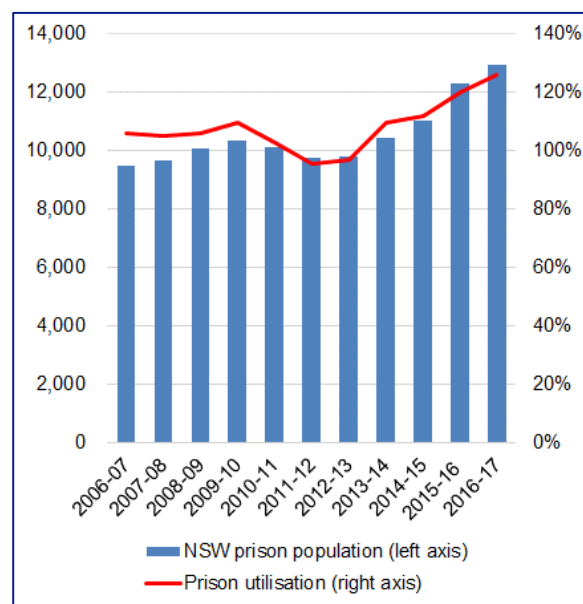
As at 30 June 2017 12,931 people were incarcerated in NSW (PC, 2018). Of these:

- 64% were held in secure custody and 36% in open custody
- 1,015 (8%) were female
- Two thirds of NSW prisoners were sentenced and one third on remand - close to the national average
- 3,141 prisoners were Indigenous (24%)

Figure 1 shows total NSW prisoner numbers fell between 2010-11 and 2012-13 but have risen sharply since. Between 2012-13 and

2016-17 prisoner numbers increased by 3,100 - a 32% uplift. As a result, prison utilisation (resident numbers compared to capacity) rose from 97% to 126%. NSW prisons are the most overcrowded in Australia.

Figure 1: NSW imprisonment, 2006-2017



Source: PC (2018). Average daily prisoner numbers

When considering the potential numbers of people facing homelessness upon leaving Corrective Services NSW, a key factor is prison throughput, not just prisoner numbers. Data of this type is hard to obtain.

3.2 Prisons

At the time of the 2016 Census there were 35 occupied prisons in NSW of which 2 were transitional facilities for women. The largest prison cluster is at Silverwater where 4 institutions house just under 2,500 inmates. The other large cluster is of 2 prisons at Long Bay at Matraville housing around 1,500 prisoners.

The largest individual prisons are shown in Table 1. Median resident numbers per prison in 2016 was 255. There are also examples of small facilities, such as at Brewarrina (38 inmates) and Ivanhoe (35).

Table 1: Largest NSW prisons, 2016

<i>Institution</i>	<i>Security</i>	<i>Prisoners</i>
Metropolitan Remand & Reception, Silverwater	Maximum	1,076
Metropolitan Special Programs, Long Bay	Medium	1,073
Parklea	Maximum	979
Junee	Medium	842
Cessnock	Maximum	838
Wellington	Maximum	673

Source: ABS (2017). All the above prisons house men only

Around 80% of women prisoners are housed in 3 dedicated prisons located in the Sydney basin at Silverwater, Windsor (Dillwynia) and Emu Plains. Transitional Centres at Bolwara (for Aboriginal women) and Parramatta (for long term prisoners) provide support for 30 female offenders approaching release from custody.

Prison ownership and expansion

Of the 5 jurisdictions with privately operated prisons in 2017, NSW had the lowest proportion of prisoners managed outside the public system (14%). There are two prisons currently privately operated:

- Parklea’s prisoner management was outsourced to GEO in 2009
- Junee was built privately in 1993 and has been managed privately since, currently by the US based GEO Group

The June 2016 NSW Budget announced \$3.8 billion funding over 4 years to increase prison capacity by 7,000 beds. Most new accommodation will be undertaken by the

public sector, though a new 1,700 bed facility at Grafton has been awarded to the private sector Northern Pathways Consortium led by British-based outsourcing company Serco, and Macquarie.

By June 2017 an additional 1,629 prison beds had been built with a 3,560 in design, procurement or construction (CSNSW, 2017a).

Regional prison locations

Figure 2 shows NSW prison locations. There is a wide distribution, though most larger facilities are in an arc within a two hours’ drive of Sydney.

The NSW prisoner population is not evenly distributed across FACS districts, with a high concentration in areas west of Sydney (Table 2). Half of all NSW prisoners are held in 18 jails in just 3 regions, while 4 FACS regions had no occupied prisons in 2016.

Table 2: NSW prisons by FACS region, 2016

<i>Region</i>	<i>Prisoners</i>	<i>Prisons</i>
Western Sydney	3,055	6
Nepean Blue Mountains	2,057	7
Western NSW	1,604	5
South East Sydney	1,474	2
Hunter New England	1,360	4
Murrumbidgee	1,002	2
Southern NSW	801	3
Mid North Coast	537	2
Northern NSW	255	1
Far West	122	2
Central Coast	94	1
Illawarra Shoalhaven (N1)	0	0
Northern Sydney	0	0
South West Sydney	0	0
Sydney	0	0

Source: ABS (2016). Data as at 30 June 2016. Only includes occupied prisons as at Census date. Two women’s transitional centres are included. Note FACS districts are not used by Corrective Services NSW. (N1) as at June 2016 - subsequently facilities in use at Unanderra and Nowra

Figure 2: NSW prison locations

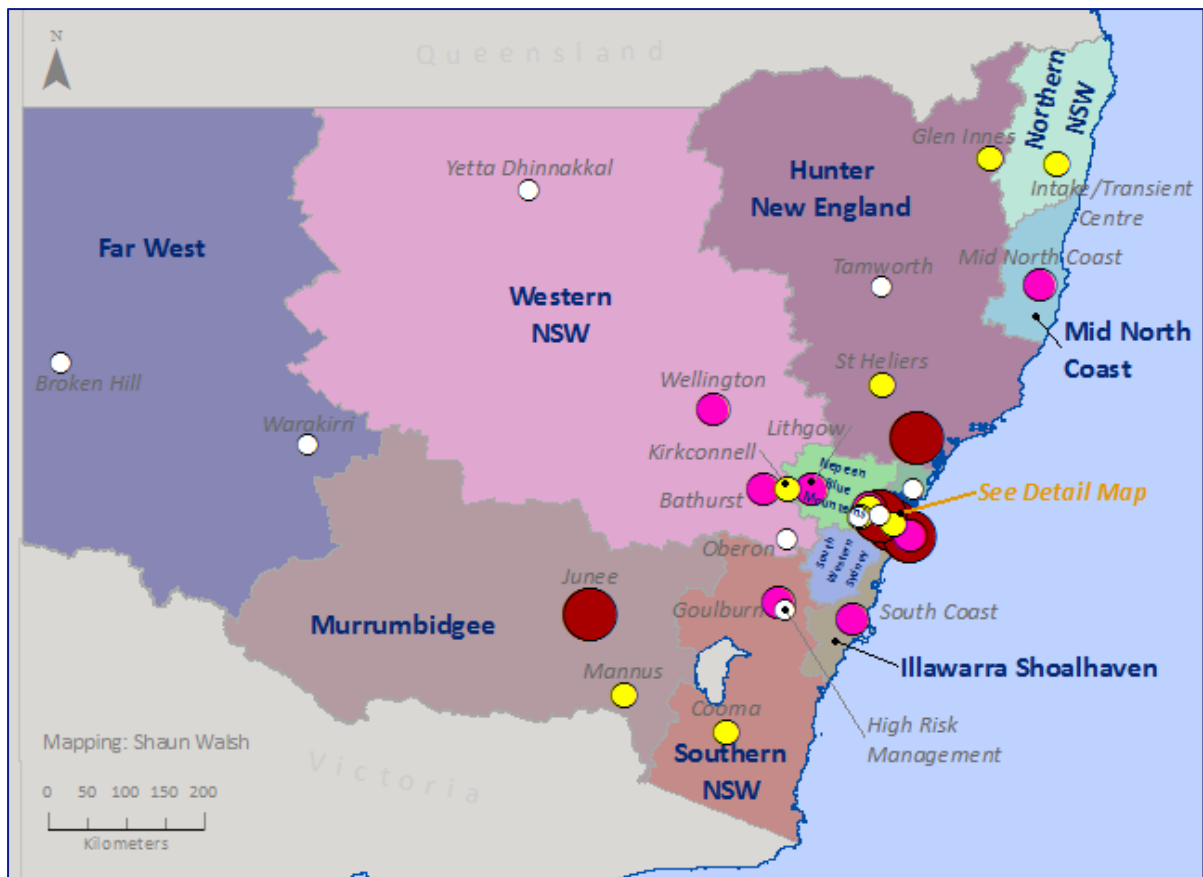
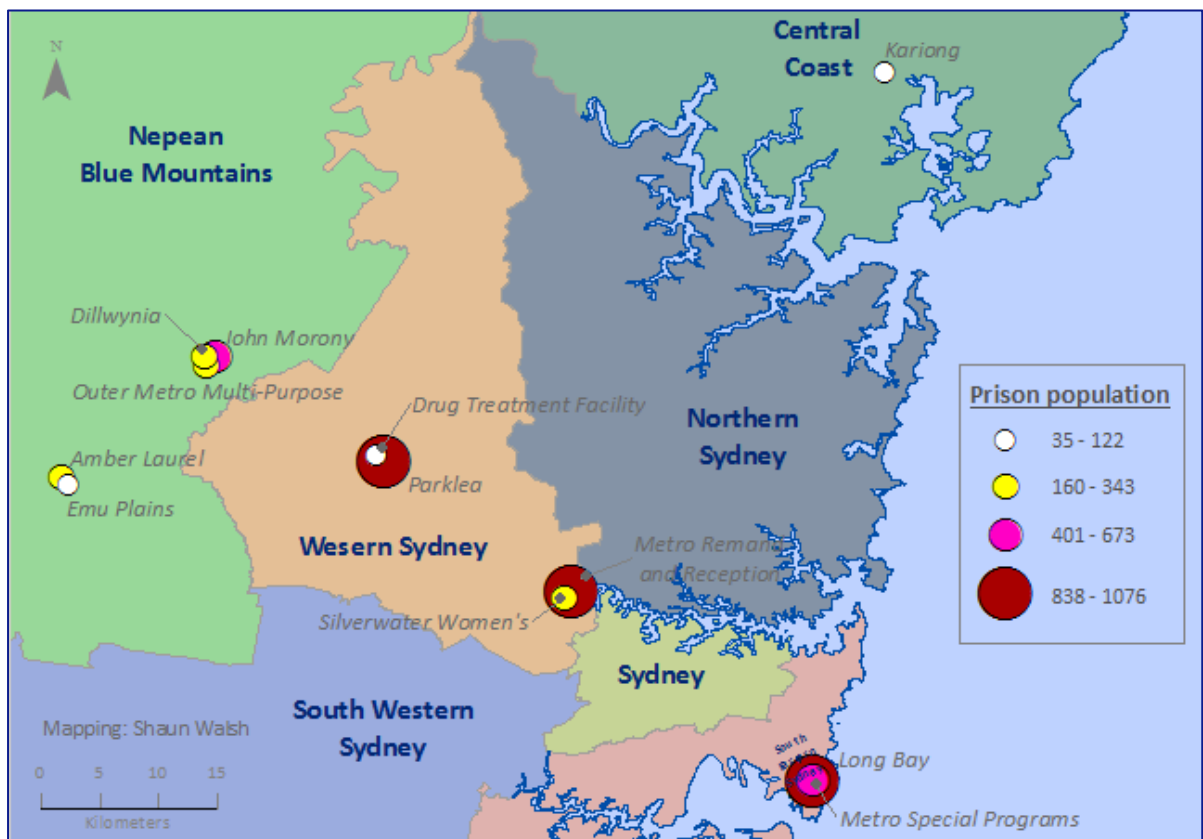


Figure 3: NSW prison locations - metro Sydney detailed map

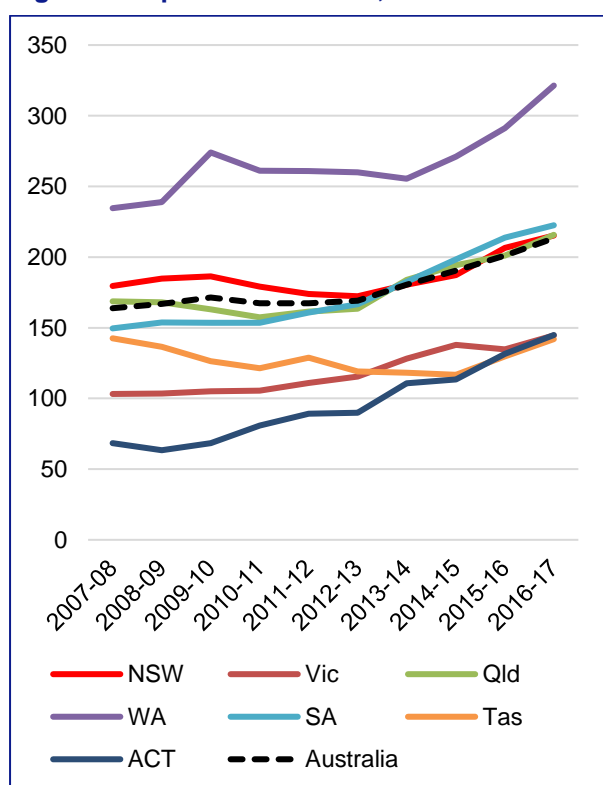


Geographic factors are a key complicating issue when considering community-based housing/service delivery. People are moved around the state when they are imprisoned, and the prison they are released from may have no correlation with where they are intending/wanting/required to live.

3.3 Imprisonment levels

Figure 4 shows imprisonment rates per 100,000 adults for all jurisdictions except the Northern Territory (NT). The national trend has been an increase, from 164 per 100,000 in 2006-07 to 213 in 2016-17. This amounts to a 30% rise over the decade.

Figure 4: Imprisonment rates, 2007-2017



Source: PC (2018). Rates per 100,000 adults. NT is included in the Australian average but not shown as a separate line

Imprisonment levels vary between jurisdictions, with the NT a clear outlier: 2016-17 rates were 904 per 100,000 people, or 4.2 times the national average. NSW has the fifth highest incarceration rate, behind

the NT, Western Australia (WA), SA and Queensland.

Indigenous incarceration rates nationally are 2,412 per 100,000 people, or 15 times the rate for non-Indigenous people. NSW's Indigenous incarceration rate is fourth nationally, behind WA, the NT and SA. However, the NSW ratio of Indigenous to non-Indigenous incarceration is below the national average and similar to Victoria's.

Table 3: NSW imprisonment rates, 2017

	NSW	Australia
Male	404.1	398.0
Female	33.2	34.2
Indigenous (A)	2,259.4	2,411.5
Non-Indigenous (B)	165.3	157.6
(A)/(B)	13.7	15.3

Source: PC (2018). Table 8A.5. Rates per 100,000 adults

NSW's sharp increase in total prison population numbers from 2012-13 (Figure 4) is in line with national trends. During this 4 year period the increase in imprisonment rate per 100,000 people in NSW (+25%) was similar to the national average (+26%) but below Queensland (+32%), SA (+34%) and the ACT (+61%).

3.4 System challenges

Prison overcrowding has been detailed in Section 3.2, leading to a need for more prison accommodation. Coupled with high rates of re-offending, the costs of the NSW criminal justice system will rise in the future.

Re-offending

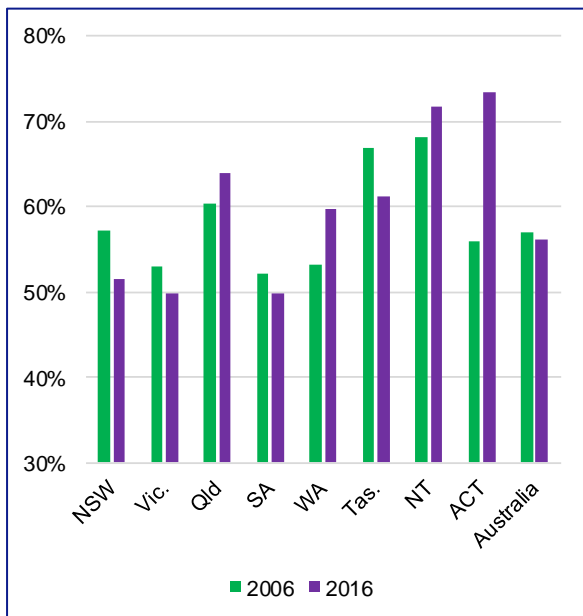
There is no consensus on how to measure re-offending rates. Data can be assessed on entry (has the prisoner committed an offence before?) and exit (will the prisoner re-offend in 1 or 2 years, or longer?). To add to the

complexity ‘offending’ could be for all offences, or just those involving a custodial sentence.

Many current prisoners have previously been incarcerated. Figure 5 shows the level of prior imprisonment in 2006 and 2016. Rates vary considerably in 2016 from a high of 74% in the ACT to the two lowest - NSW (52%) and SA (50%).

Between 2006 and 2016 NSW saw one the largest decreases (8.8%) in the number of prisoners who had previously been in jail.

Figure 5: Prior incarceration, 2016



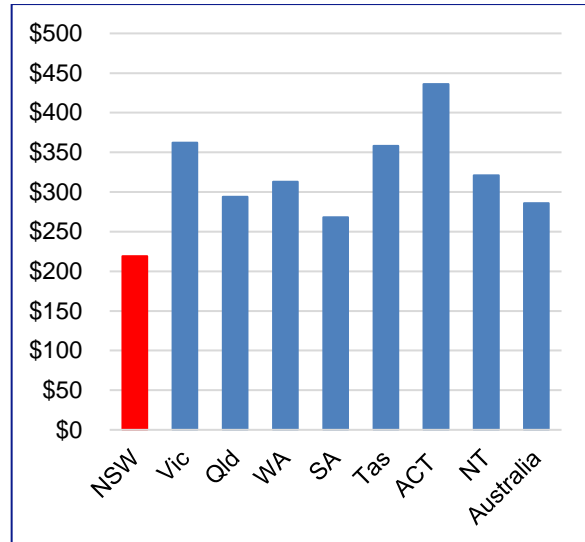
Source: ABS (2016)

Imprisonment costs

Maintaining a high prison population is expensive. As shown in Figure 6 the daily cost per prisoner varies by state, with NSW the least expensive. However, the annual cost is still high at around \$80,000 per person.

During 2016-17 NSW expenditure on prisons and community corrections, both operating costs and depreciation, was just over \$1 billion. In real terms costs have risen by 6% over 5 years (PC, 2018).

Figure 6: Annual prisoner costs, 2015-16



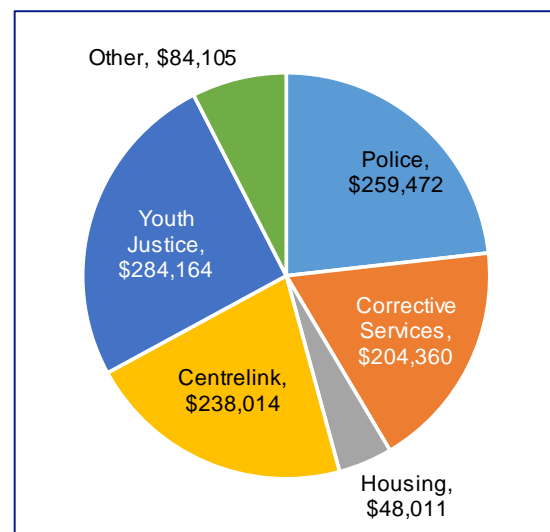
Source: PC (2018). Table 8A.17. Costs are per day

Total costs to Government

Australian research based on a study of people who have been in prison indicates high lifecycle costs of associated with both criminal justice and homelessness. Whole of life institutional costs for 11 NSW case study individuals ranged from \$900,000 to \$4.5 million (Baldry et al., 2012).

The research provided a cost breakdown per person. Figure 7 assesses ‘Hannah’ (case study 2) whose lifetime costs to Government were estimated to be \$1.1 million.

Figure 7: Lifetime costs for ‘Hannah’



Source: (Baldry et al., 2012): pp.47-48

Hannah is an Indigenous women born 1978 with cognitive, behavioural and substance abuse issues. Figure 7 shows the various agencies bearing the costs, with case study Hannah's challenges leading to 96 encounters with police from aged 13 years. The costs are met by various Departments, with less than one fifth falling to Corrective Services.

4 Policy Approaches and Innovations

Section 4 reviews approaches by the justice system, homelessness agencies and social housing providers to reducing re-offending and sustainably house ex-prisoners.

4.1 Corrective services NSW

Over recent years there have been major changes in Government responsibilities for correctional facilities, subsuming them within a broad cluster agency. This parallels the integration of social housing within Family and Community Services (FACS) in 2011.

In 2009 the stand-alone NSW Department of Corrective Services was rebranded *Corrective Services NSW* and merged to form a newly established Department of Justice and Attorney General. Juvenile Justice was added in 2011.

By 2014 the agency became known as the *Department of Justice*, and direct responsibilities widened in 2015 with the addition of Arts NSW, Screen NSW and the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing. The Department of Justice is also the lead agency for the *Justice cluster* which includes policing, fire service and cultural institutions such as Sydney Opera House.

The NSW Accord (Accord)

The (then) Department of Housing and nine other Government agencies - including Corrective Services - signed the Accord that came into effect February 2008. This aimed to provide a framework for cross-agency partnerships to improve access to social housing and support for people with complex needs, including homeless people.

In 2007-8 Housing NSW and Corrective Services agreed to work together at four sites to help released inmates gain access to public housing, with steering groups established at Nowra, Gosford and Newcastle (and later Bathurst) developing *Shared Access Operating Agreements* to help probation and parole officers source accommodation and support for offenders with complex needs (DCS, 2009: p.24).

While the Accord remains in place, it is not referred to in Government circles. In addition, an interviewee commented that it had never been fully implemented. The Accord has arguably left a partial legacy in terms of relationships built and the experiences of people who worked on these projects

The Dillwynia project

An initiative of the Accord was the *Dillwynia Shared Access Trial* for female ex-prisoners in Western Sydney. The mid-term review of the Dillwynia trial noted 'early indications show that the Shared Access approach has strong potential to enable clients with complex needs to sustain a tenancy successfully' (NSWG, 2007: p.2).

The approach to housing, employment and wrap-around support was said by three interviewees to have been successful, with positive case study examples. A person centric approach worked well, with good local buy-in from the prison and flexibility by FACS. However, the approach was acknowledged as resource intensive and might be hard to replicate across NSW.

Unfortunately, it is not clear whether the full Dillwynia project evaluation took place or it was just not released publicly. The Accord's

planned 2010 review also did not take place, so it is not clear how effective it has been. An Accord [resource kit](#) for partner agencies remains on the FACS website, though many of the details are out of date.

Parolee Support Initiative (PSI)

PSI was an Accord initiative from 2008 funded by Corrective Services and run in partnership with the Community Restorative Centre (CRC). It supported offenders with intellectual disabilities and/or mental illness in Western and South-Western Sydney.

PSI provided intensive support for parolees starting 3 months prior to release to 6-9 months post-release. It guaranteed public housing for PSI supported parolees, though only 5-10 clients were supported at any time.

A 2010 published review of PSI found that of the 13 clients assisted, 9 (70%) had sustained their tenancies with 1 returning to custody for re-offending and 4 for breach of parole conditions (CRC, 2014: p.27). Similarly, 70% of PSI ex-prisoners sustained tenancies in 2013-14 (CRC, 2014: p.14).

The author of this Report has seen a copy of the unpublished evaluation of PSI, supplied to him by Corrective Services NSW (CSNSW, 2011b). High level findings are:

- Between May 2008 and June 2011, accommodation and support was provided to 28 people, at a cost to the Government of \$1.26 million
- The 'Housing First approach has underpinned the planning and service delivery approach for the PSI model'
- Program participants re-offended at a rate of 21% after 12 months and 31% after 24 months
- The report notes that due to problems with data collection 'no conclusions can be drawn from this information on the

PSI's success or failure as a means of reducing re-offending ... these figures cannot be compared to the re-offending rates of any broader offender population'

- However, 'feedback from key stakeholders and participants has been positive indicating value in the coordinated, partnership approach of the model from the stakeholders' perspective and benefits from being 'given a chance' and the support received for the participants'

In 2014 PSI transitioned to the *Extended Reintegration Service (ERS)*. Run as a partnership between Corrective Services, FACS Housing, CRC and NSW Health, it provides case coordination to higher risk parolees with complex issues in the South West Sydney district.

In the period since September 2014 ERS supported 32 clients, each receiving an average of 26 weeks support (unpublished data supplied by Corrective Services NSW).

Funded Partnership Initiative (FPI)

Corrective Services NSW tendered their community funding projects through the FPI in September 2014. FPI aims to 'ensure that funding available to non-government organisations is prioritised towards the Government's goal of reducing the risk of reoffending and protecting the community' (CSNSW, 2015: p.202).

In 2013-14, prior to FPI, 7 organisations received \$1.8 million. This increased to 10 organisations receiving \$2.9 million in 2015-16 (CSNSW, 2014; 2016). However, support was shifted to shorter term interventions, away from a longer term housing first approach.

As shown in Table 4, there is a funding overlap between FPI and SHS services, particularly those funded under the Service Support Fund (see Section 4.2).

Table 4: FPI funding, 2015-16

<i>Recipient</i>	<i>Project</i>	<i>FPI</i>	<i>Organisation links to SHS?</i>
Adele House	Transitional supported accommodation for male offenders living in Western Sydney or Coffs Harbour regions	\$189,800	SSF funds
Arbias	Initial post-release support services to offenders with brain injury	\$937,650	No
CRC	Initial transitional and family support services, including transport	\$187,530	SHS Partner
CRC	Extended reintegration support services to offenders	\$281,295	SHS Partner
Glebe House	Supported accommodation for recently released male offenders	\$220,000	SSF funds
Guthrie House	Supported accommodation services for female offenders on release or as an alternative to incarceration	\$268,690	SSF funds
Namatijira Haven	Residential-based rehabilitation for male Aboriginal offenders with alcohol/drug dependence in the North Coast region	\$183,862	No
Judge Rainbow	Supported accommodation services to male offenders	\$428,913	SSF funds
Salvation Army Newcastle	Initial transitional support services to recently released offenders	\$93,765	No
Salvation Army Tamworth	Initial transitional support services to recently released offenders	\$46,882	No
St Vincent de Paul, Nowra	Transitional supported accommodation services to male offenders living in the South Coast region	\$125,512	SHS Lead

Source: CSNSW (2016). SSF - Service Support Fund - see Section 4.2

There are three core FPI services that assist addressing an offender's need for housing:

- **Extended Reintegration Service (ERS)**
ERS is detailed in the previous section
- **Transitional Supported Accommodation**
TSA offers 12 weeks supported accommodation to medium/high or high risk parolees post-release. The funding agreement includes transition to more stable accommodation on exiting TSA
TSA funded organisations provide 29 beds: Glebe House (4 beds), Guthrie House (5 beds), Rainbow Lodge (8 beds), Adele House (4 beds), John Purcell House (5 beds), Namatjira House (3 beds). See Table 4
Since September 2014, 438 clients have been supported for a total of 2,672 weeks, or an average of 6 weeks per client (unpublished data supplied by Corrective Services NSW)

- **Initial Transitional Service (ITS)**

ITS delivers activities linked to case plans to support higher risk parolees in the 12 weeks post release. One of the activities that can be allocated is 'Accommodation Support' to help acquire stable accommodation.

ITS operates in 14 locations: Bathurst, Campbelltown, Dubbo, Kempsey, Lismore, Mt Druitt, Parramatta, Wagga Wagga, Wollongong, Wyong (Arbias/ ACSO); Broken Hill, Leichhardt (CRC); Newcastle and Tamworth (Salvation Army)

Since September 2014, 871 clients have been referred to service providers as requiring Accommodation Support out of a total of 1,270 clients (unpublished data supplied by Corrective Services NSW)

Of the FPI services above, the only that is focused on securing stable accommodation is ERS. While the accommodation services are able to support people for up to 12 weeks, they are not funded through FPI to support them beyond that period.

An interviewee has advised that it is almost impossible to get someone into stable longer-term accommodation in 12 weeks or less. While ITS can refer people to housing providers, and assist people fill-out forms, it is limited again in terms of actually be able to secure accommodation. ITS is primarily a referral service in this regard.

It is also important to note that all FPI services only work with people on parole, so the majority of people exiting prison each year are not eligible.

Other funding

In addition to FPI initiatives, Corrective Services NSW also fund not-for-profits such as the Prisoners Aid Association of NSW which received \$170,000 in 2016-17. The organisation supports inmates in 11 prisons obtain identification documents and work-related training, easing exit from jail.

Reducing reoffending targets

NSW Government has a long history of targeting reduced reoffending. Over time, the chosen measures of success and target groups have varied. Responsibility for achieving change has often rested with Corrective Services, rather than being genuinely cross-agency. This might be a reason why results have been mixed.

Targeted reoffending reduction initiatives in NSW include:

- The *2006 State Plan* aimed to reduce by 10% the number of offenders returning to corrective services within 2 years (NSWG, 2006: p.31). Four years into the Plan there had been no positive impact (CSNSW, 2011a)
- The 2011 *NSW 2021* strategy included a target of reducing juvenile and adult re-offending by 5% by 2016 (NSWG, 2011)

- The 2015 *Premier's Priorities* included a targeted reduction in adult reoffending by 5% by 2019, with 'reoffending' taken to be reconviction within 12 months. It has been suggested by an interviewee, but not confirmed in Government papers, that \$237 million has been committed to help achieve this goal.

Latest relevant Corrective Services NSW data showed a small increase in re-convictions during 2013-14 (CSNSW, 2016: p.64). Interestingly, no data on re-offending was included in CSNSW's 2016-17 annual report.

There is a delay of at least 16 months before re-offending results can be reported accurately, so current initiatives will take time to be reflected in the data. In addition, differences in re-offending rates between periods, and between NSW and the national average, may be due to factors such as varying levels of police effectiveness or sentencing approaches.

Corrective Services NSW's approach to reducing reoffending is not linked to any additional dedicated accommodation. The 5 approaches used currently are:

- Improved intake screening, to include exit planning through the *NEXUS* pre-release program
- The *EQUIPS Program* targeting prisoners at risk of reoffending
- FPI funding (see Table 4)
- A social impact bond (see below)
- 2 transitional centres, for women

On TRACC social benefit bond

Social impact bonds are a way of raising funds from third parties where returns are linked to an organisation achieving measurable social outcomes.

NSW's third social benefit (impact) bond - *On TRACC* (Transition Reintegration and Community Connection) was launched in July 2016. Funded by National Australia Bank, it aims to prevent people on parole returning to prison within 12 months. Intensive support is given to parolees to reintegrate to the community with the focus on their first 4 months on parole.

The aim of On TRACC is to contribute towards NSW Government's target of a 5% fall in adult reoffending. It is a large-scale project, not just a pilot. In 2014-15 some 5,600 prisoners were released on parole. Funding from the bond will support 3,900 parolees over a 5 year period.

On TRACC is being delivered for Corrective Services NSW by long established not-for-profit ACSO - based in Victoria and parts of NSW. The organisation works across community support services, mental illness, homelessness and supporting ex-offenders.

Do social impact bonds work?

There is conflicting feedback from interviewees on the On TRACC bond which went live in October 2016. Unfortunately there is no publicly available information that would allow an impartial assessment.

Supporters of the bond emphasise that good data will be collected, including comparing progress between a control group and randomly selected inmates across the whole prison population. Exit plans are put in place prior to exit using collaborative approaches, prisoners are met at the gate, links to housing are in place, and receive support provided for 4 months directly then a further 8 months with aftercare.

Those interviewees less supportive of the On TRACC bond note that longer term support is by phone only. They also suggest

access to data is a problem, and there is insufficient coordination prior to release.

Overseas example

A leading international example of social impact bonds targeting reduced reoffending was *One Service* introduced at Peterborough Prison in England in 2010 (Disley et al., 2016). Prisoners serving sentences under 12 months were provided with intensive support before and after release with a focus on support and housing. Ex-prisoners were monitored and supported for 12 months after leaving prison.

Funding was provided by private investors who receive repayment plus a bonus - funded in part by England's National Lottery - if reoffending fell by over 10%. Results from 2010-14 showed an interim 8.4% reduction in reoffending. An important learning from the published evaluation was the need for careful coordination between the prison, and support and housing agencies (*ibid.*).

Social impact bonds to reduce reoffending overall have uncertain impacts. The Peterborough program was ended in 2014, though intended to run to 2017, when Government restructured approaches to probation services. A 2012 bond in Rikers Island New York showed no decrease in re-offending (Gotsis, 2017).

4.2 NSW homelessness

Census 2016 homelessness data will not be released until later in 2018. In 2011, 105,000 Australians were homeless, of whom 28,192 were in NSW. NSW's 2011 homeless rate at 40.8 per 100,000 was below the national average, and lower than Victoria - 42.6 - and Queensland - 45.8 (ABS, 2012).

NSW's 2011 homeless count included 7% rough sleepers, and others living in severely over-crowded housing (34%), supported

housing for the homeless (18%), 'couch surfing' (18%) and boarding houses (23%).

Many of ex-prisoners facing homelessness will be in overcrowded accommodation, couch surfing or in private sector boarding houses. Only a small number will be rough sleeping. However, insecurity of tenure and changing addresses often will minimise connection to community and are likely contributing factors to re-offending.

National context

In 2008 the newly elected Commonwealth Labor Government set an ambitious target to halve homelessness and offer supported accommodation to all rough sleepers by 2020 (Australian Government, 2008: p.v).

Support for people at risk of homelessness and crisis and transitional housing is delivered by SHS providers, is mainly funded through the 2009 National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH). This Agreement, which requires annual renewal, has been extended to June 2018.

From 2018-19 NPAH and the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) for social housing will be integrated into a new National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA). NHHA will separately identify homelessness funding and be indexed annually. There will also be more focus on measuring outcomes.

NSW homelessness policy

NSW implemented NPAH through the *Homelessness Action Plan 2009-14* (NSWG, 2009b). This built on existing NSW approaches including the Accord and the *Housing First initiative* where homeless people are moved directly into long-term permanent accommodation. This model was said to have 'been found to have greater success than transitional models in achieving

sustainable outcomes in ending the homelessness cycle' (NSWG, 2009a: p.30).

The Department for Corrective Services became the lead agency for coordinating provision of long-term support and accommodation for people exiting prisons to prevent homelessness under the Homelessness Action Plan 2009-14.

One of the 'housing first' initiative of the NSW Plan was *Platform 70*, a 2011 project to place 70 (later 105) rough sleepers in Woolloomooloo into long term housing. Community housing provider Bridge Housing leased private rental housing, with support provided by NEAMI. Neither housing nor support components of Platform 70 are now funded and the program has been integrated into Bridge's main housing.

A UNSW baseline evaluation of Platform 70 showed 85% of residents sustained their tenancies (BHL, 2014). The final evaluation of the program has not been made public.

System changes, 2014

Longstanding approaches to homelessness services changed through the *Going Home Staying Home* (GSHS) reforms. All SHS contracts were put to tender through a two stage process, with results announced June 2014. The aim was to move to an integrated client-centric focus, with packages:

- Tailored to priority groups including young people, men, women and families
- Allocated to *lead* SHS providers, who could enter *joint working agreements* with *partner* organisations
- Requiring managers of Government assets to be registered under the National Regulatory System for Community Housing (NRSCH)
- Based on broader service provision in specific FACS districts, rather than

supporting agencies that work in specialised fields - for example housing ex-prisoners - and supply services across wider geographical areas

Larger SHS providers were better positioned to meet the new requirements. As a result, total contract numbers fell from 336 to 157, with 201 providers reducing to 76 lead agencies. The number of small SHS lead providers fell from 75% of the total in 2014 to 34% in 2015 (KPMG, 2015).

SHS providers unsuccessful under GSHS could apply for 18 month temporary funding under the *Service Support Fund* (SSF), with payments starting November 2014. Several agencies supporting ex-prisoners received SSF funds - see Table 4 (NSWG, 2016b)

In 2015 Government announced GSHS contracts would stay in place to June 2020, including SSF funded organisations. The SSF has therefore ceased to be temporary and is integrated with other SSH funding.

Ex-prisoner focused SHS providers

Homelessness NSW as part of this research identified 29 SHS providers with specialised knowledge of supporting ex-prisoners:

- 5 receive SSF funding as 'leads': Adele House, Glebe House, Guthrie House, Judge Rainbow and Rosa. Without SSF support, these organisations would probably have closed under GSHS
- The remainder were successful under GSHS, mainly as lead providers

The main SHS service for ex-prisoners is CRC. Originally founded in 1951, CRC aims to reduce re-offending and prevent homelessness in the transition from prison. CRC report that of c.200 supported each year, no more than 13% returned to jail between 2011 and 2013 with an average of only 8% each year (CRC, 2014).

Changes to funding models from both Corrective Services NSW (through FPI) and FACS (with GSHS) resulted in CRC needing to close its housing-first, long-term support service for men exiting custody.

Following GSHS, CRC is a participant in 4 current joint working agreements covering just 3 of the 15 FACS districts. Two of CRC's contracts involve community housing providers (Wentworth, Women's Housing) and the third is a partnership with Newtown Neighbourhood Centre and the boarding house project. The final partnership is with B Miles as part of the Inner City Service for Women with Complex Needs. Prior to GSHS, CRC worked with 14 community housing providers (CRC, 2014).

To support GSHS, FACS funded CRC between May and August 2015 to deliver 18 4 hour training sessions to 194 housing workers across NSW. These workers came from SHS agencies, public housing and community housing. CRC report the training was well received but more is needed.

CRC has less discretion than in the past. Corrective Service NSW contracts are more prescriptive, and GSHS contracts are with lead SHS providers not FACS. Both types of arrangement require greater focus on relatively narrowly defined objectives.

Recent estimates are that there are only 50 beds in NSW available specifically for people who are homeless immediately on release from prison. These are largely crisis housing, operated by services funded under SSF, and FPI via Correctional Services NSW (CRC, 2016b).

While it not possible to determine the 'correct' number of beds available for ex-offenders, as will be shown in Section 4.5 the number is far lower than one other jurisdiction where data is available (South Australia). Also, AIHW data quote above

suggests SHS accommodation for ex-prisoners meets only 60% of demand.

Current status

In 2015-16 of clients accessing SHS services in NSW, 2,060 identified themselves as exiting a custodial setting (AIHW, 2017c). This is a sharp increase on 1,385 in 2014-15. Women accessing SHS services after prison (32% of the total) are considerably more represented than their 7% share of the NSW prison population.

Homelessness NSW has priorities issues facing released prisoners, holding workshops in April 2015 and February 2016. The latter identified reviewing FACS Housing tenancy policies, greater collaboration between Government agencies and better support for pre-release prisoners as priorities (HoNSW, 2016).

NSW Government's 2016 *Foundations for Change* discussion paper was intended to lead to a new homelessness strategy 'in the coming months' after consultation closed in November 2016. No strategy has been produced as at February 2018.

The Foundations paper noted the 'relationship between homelessness and reoffending is not direct or causal but stable housing does appear to have a role to play in reducing re-offending' (NSWG, 2016a: p.31).

During 2016 FACS commissioned a consultant to review issues relating to housing ex-prisoners. Unfortunately, the report has not been made public.

4.3 NSW social housing

The public housing agency - FACS Housing - plays a major role in coordinating housing services used by ex-prisoners through:

- Coordinating inter-agency homelessness meetings in each FACS district, including

attendance by various agencies including Corrective Services NSW. This allows more localised solutions

- Offering bond loans and other products supporting private rental tenancies
- Providing support delivered by FACS Housing Office and Link2Home staff
- Running *Temporary Accommodation* (TA) - emergency housing for up to 28 days each year in motels and caravan parks for people at risk of homelessness but not eligible for social housing. Set2Go is a pre-assessment for people leaving custody to access TA on release
- Administering the *Housing Pathways* social housing application and waiting list system. Prisoners can - in theory - apply by phone while in custody, though do not have internet access

From FACS's annual reports, numbers of people assisted by SHS services have remained relatively steady over the last 6 years at around 52,000 per annum. However, households using TA have increased from under 14,000 in 2013-14 to 24,800 in 2015-16 - a 77% increase.

Tenancy settings

Social housing providers:

- Allow a tenant to keep open a tenancy for up to 6 months, while in prison, if they pay the minimum rent of \$5 per week. The basic absence allowed while in prison is 3 months, though applicants can apply for a 6 month absence (LANSW, 2015)
- Tenants who go to prison for more than six months must relinquish their tenancy unless another family member is recognised as the tenant
- Tenancy Reinstatement allows for tenants with custodial sentences less than three years to apply to have their

tenancy reinstated rather than starting a new application for housing. While this is a positive policy, it is not clear how much it is used, and whether it is widely known about by people who could take advantage of it

- Clients entering custody can suspend a housing application.

Community housing's role

Community housing providers both in Australia and overseas have been involved for many years in accommodating high needs tenants, including ex-offenders. In Australia, the sector's role has expanded with the growth in community housing's share of the social sector rising from 8% in 2006 to 21% in June 2017 (PC, 2018).

There has been a traditional divide between community housing providers offering long term social housing, and SHS providers delivering support and crisis accommodation. This probably reflects different Commonwealth funding sources, and a policy aim to minimise organisations delivering housing and support.

The pattern has become more complicated:

- Some community housing providers started to deliver homelessness products funded through specific initiatives. For example, Bridge Housing's Platform 70 project (see Section 4.2) and Mission Australia Housing's Camperdown Common Ground project - both funded through NPAH
- NSW's implementation of NRSCH ensures regulation of a wide range of housing providers. Tier 3 organisations often have a broader focus on disability, homelessness etc.
- GSH reforms required a consortium member to be NRSCH registered if any accommodation provided is owned by Government.

Table 5 shows the complex overlay between community housing and SHS providers resulting from the GSH changes. It shows all Tier 1 and 2 NRSCH organisations with SHS involvement, including through a wider group structure:

- Of the 29 Tier 1 and 2 providers, 16 (55%) have SHS connections
- Three 'mainstream' community housing providers, whose business is predominantly long term social housing, are leads in GSH packages (Wentworth, Housing Plus and Women's Housing Company). A further 7 'mainstream' providers are participants through joint working agreements
- The three large SHS providers (Mission, Vinnies, Wesley Mission) also have community housing providers
- Five organisations at the lower part of Table 5 have a community housing provider in a group structure, though the SHS packages are through a different part of the group. Note that Mission Australia is a party to GSH contracts through both the housing (Mission Australia Housing) and non-housing (Mission Australia) businesses
- The 'mainstream' community housing providers in Table 5 more often work in regional or peri-urban locations

Table 5: Community housing providers and GSHH

CHP/SHS	Tier	CHP lead	CHP part.	CHP total	SHS leads	SHS partner	Total
Wentworth Community Housing	1	2	3	5			5
On Track Community Programs	2	3		3			3
Argyle Community Housing	1		3	3			3
Mission Australia Housing/Mission Australia	1		3	3	22	3	28
Housing Plus	1	1	1	2			2
Hume Community Housing	1		2	2			2
Women's Housing Company	2	1		1			1
Community Housing Limited	1		1	1			1
Compass Housing Services	1		1	1			1
Homes Out West	2		1	1			1
SGCH (St George Community Housing)	1		1	1			1
Wesley Community Housing/Wesley Mission	2			0	10	4	14
Southern Youth and Family Services (SYFS)	2			0	4		4
BaptistCare NSW & ACT	2			0		1	1
Amelie Housing/St Vincent de Paul Society	2			0	14	4	18
Uniting/Uniting Care	2			0	5		5
Totals		7	16	23	55	12	90

Source: Search of FACS and NRSCH websites, July 2017. The use of the term 'lead' and 'partner' is as per the website

Management transfers

In 2017 tenders community housing providers tendered for whole-of-region asset and tenancy management outsourcing from FACS Housing.

Around 14,000 transfers will take place between October 2018 and September 2019. These include in the following areas, and approximate transfer numbers:

- **Maitland:** 2,200 to Hume Community Housing, 2019 Q3 (Quarter 3)
- **Upper Hunter:** 1,800 to Compass Housing, 2019 Q2
- **New England:** 1,800 to Homes North, 2019 Q2
- **Shoalhaven:** 970 to Southern Cross, 2018 Q4
- **Coffs Harbour:** 1,100 to Mission Australia Housing, 2019 Q3

- **Port Macquarie:** 1,300 to Community Housing Limited, 2018 Q4
- **Ryde:** 1,900 to Link Housing, 2018 Q4
- **Northern Beaches:** 1,200 to Bridge Housing/Women's Housing, 2019 Q3
- **North Sydney:** 1,400 to SGCH, 2019 Q2

Only 4 of the 9 transfer locations contain a prison (Shoalhaven, New England, Upper Hunter and Port Macquarie). However, there will be a wider impact:

- Ex-prisoners are likely to seek social housing in all transfer areas
- Transferee community housing providers will take-over various FACS Housing responsibilities including inter-agency coordination, TA, housing offices and offering private rental products

4.4 Regional NSW focus

The 15 FACS districts have different housing markets and issues with homelessness, therefore there will be differentiated challenges with housing ex-prisoners. Specific local factors are important, as detailed in two mini case studies.

Nepean Blue Mountains

This district can be characterised as one where there has been a longstanding close collaboration between SHS and housing providers for many years. GSHS did not lead to major changes as it was largely current service providers who were successful in the tender.

The overlay between GSHS service providers ensures good coordination. While there are different organisations as lead providers, many SHSs are involved in multiple packages covering the region, often through joint working agreements. The same key people therefore are well known to each other, and to Government.

This is good working relationship between agencies is not thought to be the case in all FACS districts. This may be due to lack of a legacy of relationships, or new GSHS providers awarded contracts from outside the region. Regional areas were thought by interviewees to be more cohesive than metro ones, with agencies more cooperative and willing to exercise more discretion.

Wentworth is both the strongest community housing provider in the region as well as a major SHS participant as both lead and partner. As a result, Wentworth Housing is closely tied into as well as part of the strong local SHS network. This is unusual in NSW, but said to work well.

Wentworth became involved in homelessness services in 2010 through a one-off initiative

Project 40. Often community housing providers entered through initiatives funded under the Accord or earlier homelessness plans. Once in the sector, these housing providers were then more likely to bid and be successful under GSHS.

While Wentworth's role is important, its activities are differentiated. In some GSHS contracts the role is to manage housing, in others to deliver SHS services. The two activities are functionally separated in the organisation. However, it is easier to make contact and share insights across the organisation given housing and SHS skills.

CRC has good links to the Nepean Blue Mountains FACS district, strengthening the support given to ex-prisoners. Wentworth advise CRC are subcontracted to support 40 ex-prisoners in the district's adult homelessness service during 2016-17, and actually assisted 43.

Shoalhaven

As with the previous FACS district, the Shoalhaven demonstrates very close collaboration between SHS and housing providers, and good links with the local prison. The inter-agency meetings work well, allowing staff from different provides to establish personal connections. These links can then be used to help case management.

Shoalhaven is a regional area with one major town - Nowra. Most agencies are located within a short walking distance, though links are less straightforward with agencies based in Wollongong covering the Illawarra and the Shoalhaven. Clear local identity helps cross-agency teams solve problems with 'our people' in 'our area'.

As a coastal holiday destination, Shoalhaven's housing market has larger numbers of holiday homes and holiday rentals, and fewer longer term private rentals. Hence accommodation is

in short supply, especially during the summer. Motels (of which only 2 have agreed to take ex-prisoners) and caravan parks are more expensive, and owners will favour people on holiday. This is also a time when more homeless people move to the area due to the weather and proximity to a rail terminus.

A 40-bed Community Offenders Support Program (COSP) facility was constructed adjacent to the Nowra jail to provide housing for parolees heading back to the community. Despite the shortage of local crisis accommodation, with only 5 dedicated beds available through St Vincent de Paul, the COSP facility has remained unused since completed in 2010.

One scheme that worked well in the Shoalhaven was a pilot by Centrelink where applicants could be assessed while still in prison. Good local connections also encouraged banks to help establish banking facilities for people while still in prison, allowing easier transitions on exit.

The local prison in the past held events every 2 months where housing and community services held an 'open day' event, allowing prisoners' questions to be answered. These were said by an interviewee to have been useful, but have not been held recently.

In summary, local collaboration has led to several good outcomes in the Shoalhaven and strong networks. However, these rely on specific individuals, pilot projects and special arrangements that sometimes fall into abeyance. Longer term benefits, for example use of the 40-bed COSP facility, appear stalled due to Corrective Service NSW's low priority for housing issues.

4.5 South Australian case study

The state has perhaps Australia's most comprehensive approaches to housing ex-

prisoners, with important recent innovations (see: Gilmour & Stott, 2016):

Offender support and housing

The Offenders Aid and Rehabilitation Services of SA (OARS) dates from 1887. Their Community Transitions Supportive Accommodation Service provides state-wide specialised support for clients exiting prison either homeless or at risk of homelessness. OARS can access a range of housing:

- 7 crisis hostels managed by the public housing agency, with support services supplied by OARS, providing 42 beds for up to 3 month occupancy
- 80 *Integrated Housing Exits Program* (IHEP) properties offering 12 month tenancies for 60 adults, 20 young people using 'housing first' principles (as self-described by SA Government). Support is provided by OARS, and properties managed by public housing (40%) and community housing (60%)

Established 2003, IHEP is coordinated by SA Correctional Services, with the public housing agency (Housing SA) undertaking needs assessment. Housing SA and OARS staff visit the prisoner in jail and manage their exit

Eligible people not allocated an IHEP property due to lack of housing receive ongoing case management and support from OARS through the 2012 *Integrated Housing Exits Alternative Accommodation and Support* (IHEAAS) program

- 45 transitional housing properties with support by OARS, have been managed by community housing providers following an outsourcing tender in 2013. Tenancies are for 18 months

OARS's income in 2015-16 was \$3.9 million (or \$2.27 per SA resident), compared to the equivalent NSW organisation CRC of \$7.2

million or \$0.92 per NSW resident (OARS, 2016; CRC, 2016a). Note that OARS homelessness services cover the whole of SA, unlike CRC in NSW which only has involvement in some FACS districts.

The BASP program

Community housing provider Anglicare SA won a 2014 tender to run the *Bail Accommodation Support Program* (BASP). Opened in June 2017, the Port Adelaide property offers 30 beds for defendants granted bail but face housing issues. It allows homeless people to provide an address to the Court so that bail can be granted, helping reduce the prison population.

Anglicare SA funded the development on land they own, with Government providing a service payment that needs to cover funding for capital and operating costs over a 15-year lease arrangement. This is a similar broad approach to NSW's Social and Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF).

BASP offers voluntary short-term tenancies for 10 to 28 days and tenants must adhere to bail conditions and house rules. The building has 24/7 support from Anglicare SA including on health, financial advice and maintaining current employment.

While the project has only just been launched, an interviewee considered the project was leading to 'terrific outcomes'. Support agencies are working together well, and the accommodation is fully occupied.

Government targets

In August 2016 SA Correctional Services launched a target of reducing re-offending within 2 years of exiting prison by 10% by 2020 (DCS, 2016). A Strategic Advisory Panel was appointed, chaired by Warren Mundine and comprising high profile representatives from academia, business, the police, media and politics.

In July 2017 SA Government accepted all 36 Panel's recommendations, pledging \$40 million new funding. The report noted 'the clear association between homelessness and crime highlights the need to apply a Housing First approach to community-based offender programs in order to reduce re-offending and increase rehabilitation prospects' (DCS, 2017: p.41).

Based on work by Ernst & Young (E&Y), late in 2017 community housing providers were invited to tender for the *New Foundations* program, valued at \$18.9 million over 4 years. It will deliver long term accommodation, tenancy support and reintegration services for 12 months post-release. Funding to housing providers will include an element of payment by results, though details have not been released.

New Foundations should be able to deliver around 50 additional new properties dedicated to house ex-offenders, in addition to 147 already available in SA. This compares to 50 properties in NSW (CRC, 2016b).

A progress report on the '10% by 2020' strategy in early 2018 noted that for prisoners released in 2014-15, the rate of reoffending dropped to 45%. This represents a 2.1% decrease in the reoffending rate overall, one fifth of the 10% target for 2020 (DCS, 2018).

5 Stakeholder Feedback and Analysis

Section 5 summarises input to the project received through the 2 e-Surveys and stakeholder interviews.

5.1 Stakeholder feedback

The e-Surveys covered a wide range of organisations: 25 community housing and 24 SHS providers.

Distribution and scale

As shown in Figure 8, these covered nearly all of NSW. More responding SHSs were based in Sydney, SW Sydney and Western Sydney - the latter two districts having high prison populations. Community housing provider respondents were more evenly distributed.

Many SHS and community housing providers only deliver services over a limited geographical area, typically 2 FACS districts. A couple of the larger providers of both types operate over 7 or more districts.

From Figure 9, just under 30% of SHS and 8% of community housing provider respondents were unsure how many ex-prisoners they supported or housed. Ideally both types of provider need to know these numbers to offer tailored services.

SHS providers typically provided support to fewer than 10 ex-prisoners each year. These are quite low numbers, making it hard to develop specialised skills. Community housing providers might house up to 30 ex-prisoners at any one time, though have more staff and therefore many tenancy offers will not have specific knowledge.

Figure 8: FACS districts of survey respondents

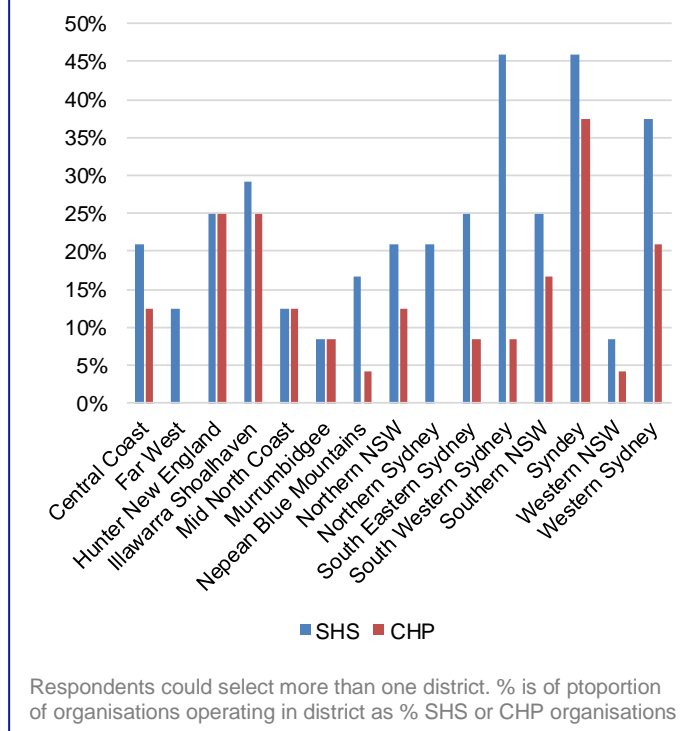
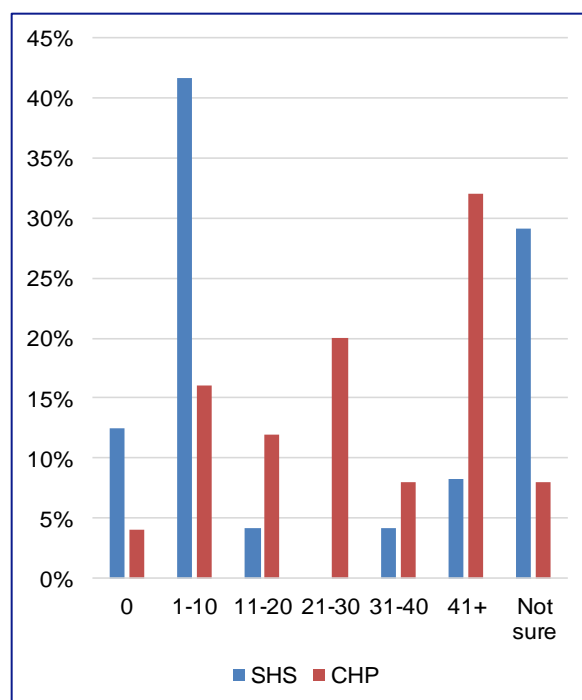


Figure 9: Service provision



Numbers of ex-prisoners supported each year (SHS), or currently accommodated (CHPs)

For the survey respondents, 84% of SHS providers and 62% of community housing providers operate in FACS districts where prisons are located. Both types of organisations therefore provide support and housing in districts without prisons, as not all ex-prisoners move locally on exit.

Of the community housing providers, 19% are a GSH lead agent, 63% a partner in GSH joint working agreements and 41% had formal arrangements with SHS providers other than under GSH. This confirms the strong involvement of NSW community housing providers in working with people facing homelessness.

In terms of staff skills, 39% of community housing providers employ people with skills, training or past experience in the issues facing people leaving prison. For SHS providers, 29% employ staff who have a lived experience of leaving prison. Both these figures are positive. However, it also suggests more training might be needed for the 61% of community housing providers with staff lacking ex-prisoner skills.

Sector dynamics

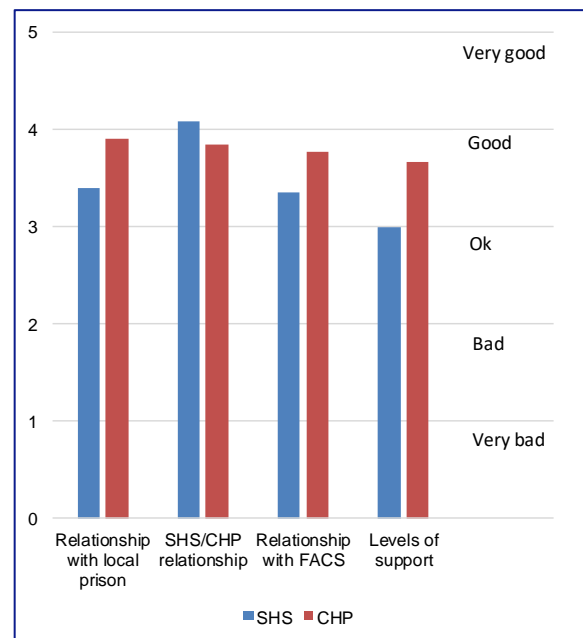
The e-Survey asked a number of questions establishing how respondents viewed relationships between various actors involved in ex-prisoner support, as well as how much training was available (Figure 10)

Most respondents were positive about both relationships and support in the sector, typically rating responses between 'ok' and 'good'. This indicates there are no major flaws in the way 'the system' is working.

Of the various relationships, SHS and community housing provider interaction was rated most highly, followed by the relationship between providers and local prisons. Scores for the relationship with FACS were slightly lower, especially for

SHSs. However, the difference in scores is not large, and seldom were relationships rated 'bad' (and never 'very bad')

Figure 10: Attitude survey



Relationships with prisons

Only half community housing provider respondents reported a relationship with a local prison, though those that did considered it be a good relationship. Lack of a prison relationship may be due to there being no prison nearby, or a prison having been approached but not open to dialogue.

It was reported often the prison contacted the housing provider when accommodation was needed, though in many cases the referral came from the SHS provider and the prison was only later contact over release and other details.

Where there is no formal relationship with a prison, the process of exiting prisoners was often not positive. A respondent noted the local prison 'generally makes contact at very short notice and people existing criminal justice systems are not well supported/prepared'. Another noted 'prisoners are released without any communication with us

but are given our business card. We have tried to implement processes to combat but this isn't always successful'.

Relationships with prisons were said to work better where a community housing provider was also an SHS service (see Table 5). One provider had a strong relationship with the local prison, attended 'open days' and helped prisoners with housing applications. FACS staff were said to have the advantage of being able to take laptops into jails.

More SHSs had a relationship with prisons (80%) than housing providers (50%):

- The quality of the SHS/prison connection is often good, but can vary depending on people and programs, and between prisons (even those in the same FACS district - with relationships with Coffs Harbour and Grafton jails cited to be significantly different)
- A typical comment was there is 'no formal MoU, and [the] relationship depends on personal contacts between front line staff and prison workers'
- Inter-personal connections can be made by SHSs and corrective service staff attending inter-agency meetings
- One link was developed where an SHS agency was a member of the prison's Community Consultative Committee
- Some SHS agencies (and community housing providers) have built links with prisons by pro-actively making contact. The type of initiative is less often made people from within the prison
- Many prisons invite SHS and social housing agencies to 'open days' where they can inform prisoners of options on exit. These are said to work well, but are not held by all prisons and often not on a regular basis

- One SHS service ran a funded transitional supported housing program. The respondent noted 'we are no longer running that program but will still keep the relationship going and accept referrals through our mainstream referral process'.

While Corrective Services NSW indicated there should be consistent approaches for housing and support workers to enter prisons to help offenders plan their exit, the stakeholder interviews showed large variations. Some prisons cite security issues, with staff shortages sometimes resulting in 'lock downs'. One community housing provider noted they were still waiting after a year to get security clearance for their staff.

The survey results, confirmed by interviews, are of divergent sets of provider/prison relationships across NSW, even within the same FACS district. This suggests a lack of central guidance or consistent application of policies by Corrective Services NSW and FACS.

Current ad hoc arrangements work relatively well - in the circumstances - though rely on personal connections. This places the system at risk if there is staff turnover.

Relationships with FACS

There was divergence between SHS and community housing providers on the issue of working with the local FACS Housing office over ex-prisoners. Community housing providers saw the relationship as 'good' or 'very good', while SHS agencies tended to rate 'ok'. This may be because SHS's are advocating for housing for their clients, and needs will not always be met.

One housing provider commented 'we have a good relationship with FACS but I'm not sure we're working together in supporting ex-prisoners'.

Where there was a good relationship with FACS, rapport had been built through regional homelessness inter-agency meetings, with one region having a specific sub-committee for people leaving custody.

FACS staff were said by one respondent to exercise a degree of discretion over ex-prisoners who had previously held a tenancy. Another though suggested regular procedures are followed, which could be a problem with tenant debt and missing ID documents. Mention was made that accessing TA could be difficult, requiring the SHS's consistent advocacy.

Overall, coordination at FACS district level appears from the survey to be working as intended. The key relationships are highly rated, with few negative comments. In whole-of-region transfers to community housing, providers will need to ensure the positive working relationship continues.

SHS and community housing providers

Relationships between these organisations work well with 30% of SHSs and 33% of housing providers rating these as 'very good' - the highest rating.

Most but not all arrangements between homelessness and housing providers are supported by MoUs or GSHS joint working agreements. Relationships are hence more formal and regularised than between SHS and housing providers and local prisons.

A housing provider noted about an SHS service 'we generally find the quality of support and communication with our organisation to be positive though this can be subject to quality of individual staff'. SHSs did not raise negative issues about community housing providers, though noted stock shortages were a problem.

Close relationships are built where the community housing provider manages

properties for the SHS agency, with examples of collaboration on re-designing properties to better meet demand. However, as a SHS staff member noted: 'we work well together though there are some challenges for the community housing provider in managing perceived risks in tenancies'.

Three community housing providers are also SHS leads. Their businesses manage the two activities separately, which for Women's Housing works well easily as the teams are located in different offices. While separation is maintained, referrals are easier and there is greater knowledge of the challenges of high-needs residents.

Training and support

The level of information and training in supporting and housing ex-prisoners was generally rated less positively by respondents. Some 20% of community housing providers and 13% of SHSs rated this area 'bad' or 'very bad'.

Community housing providers are generally not aware any support is available, and suggested 'training, knowledge, understanding of issues/needs could be improved'. Others have had to 'learn on the job', bring knowledge from previous jobs in Corrections, or in one case an SHS service trained housing staff.

SHS staff had better training and support in dealing with people who were chronically homeless, though often this was general and did not refer to ex-prisoners: 'no specific training has been available in the area, so clients exiting gaol are treated as all clients'. Training, when provided, was in Sydney which could be an issue for regional agencies.

Respondents considered SHS's skill building on ex-prisoner issues benefits from employing some staff with a lived experience leaving prison. Conversations with other

support agencies - including CRC are also useful. But one agency would be 'very supporting and encouraging of any and all training offered to better help their workers'.

While overall, the level of training and support was not seen to be a major problem for SHSs, the approach remains ad hoc and more support could be offered. Currently CRC appear to play only a minor role and were seldom mentioned by respondents.

Private prisons

There are two current corrective facilities run by private operators, with plans for a new private prison at Grafton. Views on private sector involvement in corrective services were divergent, and the topic controversial.

Respondents involved in private prison schemes, as well as the private-finance On TRACC social impact bond were positive about approaches to reducing re-offending. The not-for-profit partners saw benefits in being involved, and were optimistic about the projects' greater emphasis on links between stable housing and preventing exit into homelessness.

Private operators GEO and Serco, both head-quartered overseas, were seen by some interviewees to bring progressive views on prison management. Both operated in countries promoting 'housing first' initiatives. The focus was on prisoner exit pathways to accommodation, employment and strong support networks.

GEO and Serco were said to understand the need to partner with local not-for-profits, on housing, work and support. Serco was one of the first operators to involve English housing associations in their prison contracts, at Doncaster and Peterborough.

At Grafton, Serco is looking for North Coast Community Housing to meet inmates while still in jail and help with housing transitions

in the case management plans. CRC is also being consulted on best practice. This role for the not-for-profits at Grafton would be greater than in public sector prisons.

5.2 System review

The e-Surveys asked organisations to suggest what works well, what works badly, and suggestions for improvements in housing ex-prisoners. The following points are ranked based on frequency of responses.

Works well:

- Good local relationships and collaborative approaches between SHSs, housing providers, prisons and Government agencies
- Services combining accommodation and support for ex-prisoners
- Continuation of contact and support both in prison and on exit
- Well considered pre-release case management
- Flexibility in case management and housing options - for example for former social housing applications

Does not work well:

- Housing availability, of all types - crisis, transitional, dedicated long term social, affordable private rentals etc.
- Lack of sufficient SHS services and funding, especially services with a focus on assisting ex-prisoners
- Current support programs are too short - more than 3 months often needed
- Challenges with social housing rules on arrears, bad tenancy exits etc.
- Clients not continuing to access support services post-release

- People incarcerated for short periods, then re-offending and returning to jail - often a problem with sentencing
- Prisons releasing inmates at short notice and with few preparations, often into homelessness and with little on-going supervision and support
- Inflexibility with current transitional housing, with housing providers restricted from swapping properties
- Ex-prisoners being sent to or approaching SHS and housing providers with little information available. Many were reported to expect automatic access to a ready supply of social housing
- Restrictions on access to IT systems in prisons for inmates and support workers
- Improved ability to complete social housing applications while in jail, and ability to gather relevant ID documents
- More and better training for SHS, community housing and corrective services staff
- Regional housing accords in FACS districts between housing providers, SHSs and Corrective Services NSW
- More support for ex-prisoners after release to reduce isolation and build stronger community connections
- Local co-location of SHS and social housing services to improve coordination:

'This work is about systems not individual programs or agencies, it would be great to see some structures built in that line up with the concept of Throughcare'

Suggestions for improvements:

- Develop a program for more housing for ex-prisoners, linked to funded support, and using housing first approaches:

'Proper Housing First initiatives should be in play - from prison, that is, not from crisis or temporary arrangements in between' (SHS provider)
- Support programs to be available for between 1 and 2 years post-release
- Greater, and more straightforward access, of housing and support staff in prisons, including better coordination of release dates and exit plans

'We could have a specific day each week/fortnight that all relevant services attend gaol and meet with prisoners at that time assess need, identify required support follow up and start building support relationships' (SHS provider)
- Pre-release training in sustaining tenancies and independent living
- Improved record keeping by SHS and housing providers to identify further support needed for ex-prisoners
- Greater involvement by corrections staff in local coordination meetings:

'The presence of correctional staff at inter-agencies within their districts would build an important familiarity and encourage collaboration. The presence of senior correctional representatives at DHIGs and DIACCs etc (where not already) would encourage the collaboration at a more structural level'

5.3 Analysis

The research for this report has found a neutral or moderately positive view on current NSW approaches to housing and supporting ex-prisoners. GHSH has been accepted as setting the new 'rules of the game', although the impact on specialist homelessness services is still felt - particularly by CRC.

While there is an understanding of some of the benefits that can be brought by the 'new architecture' of FACS districts, more needs to be done to ensure that all districts mirror the close working relationships that have been demonstrated in certain locations.

The existing system works in part due to the goodwill of certain individuals, and the shared connections built during periods when NSW Government was taking a more holistic, interventionist approach characterised by the Accord. For the current system to be sustainable longer-term, more formal and consistent approaches are needed. However, these should take into account local differences and innovations.

While there are positives in the broad picture, change is needed. SA has shown what can be achieved through a coordinated whole-of-Government approach. Corrective Services, homelessness services and social housing need close alignment and shared goals and objectives. Currently in NSW only Corrective Services 'owns' the target for reducing re-offending by 5%.

Community housing providers can play a leadership role, in part through their relatively flexibility and revenue diversity compared to either SHS providers or Government agencies. The sector is already deeply embedded in the homelessness service co-delivery, including supporting people exiting correctional services.

Based on how the Community Tenancy Scheme was established in the early 1980s, reinforced by the up-coming whole-of-region management transfers, NSW community housing providers already have and will further develop defined spatial operating areas. This makes them ideally placed to act as *community anchors*.

'Community anchor' is a concept popularised in Britain where not-for-profit organisations

act as focal point to help address complex local social issues. Community housing providers from the late 1990s started looking beyond traditional landlord services, helping coordinate and build capacity of other support agencies in an effort to address the poverty and disadvantage (Wadhams, 2006).

6 Recommendations

This Report will form the basis of continuing discussions in the community housing and homelessness sectors. In addition, it aims to lead to practical demonstration projects that will help inform best practice across NSW.

The Federation and Homelessness NSW are looking to develop an initiative in 2018 based on the approach detailed in Box 1 which aims to strengthen the evidence base and encourage innovation.

Community housing providers successful in the Social Housing Management Transfers in regional areas will be approached when results are made, potentially November 2017. Two workshops will be convened, one for each pilot area, involving a wide range of local service and support agencies.

Other initiatives suggested below can be progressed through a close collaboration between the Federation, Homelessness NSW, CRC, FACS and Corrective Services.

6.1 Aligning with Government initiatives

NSW Government is changing social housing delivery through the *Future Directions* strategy. New schemes are in progress for Social Housing Management Transfers, the Social and Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF) and Communities Plus.

These initiatives allow new approaches to housing ex-prisoners to be incorporated in wider housing transactions. For example, Amelie Housing and St Vincent de Paul are said to be considering this in their successful SAHF bid for 500 new social and affordable homes.

Management transfers

Proposals shown in Box 1 indicate how the up-coming transfers can be used to test innovation. Transferee community housing providers will become both the main social landlord in areas, as well as have new responsibilities for system coordination - particularly over homelessness.

Transferee community housing providers will need greater knowledge of running inter-agency meetings, and how TA is delivered. The Federation is keen to support building and sharing knowledge in the management transfer regions, ensuring best practice ideas - for example on housing ex-prisoners - are incorporated.

Corrective Services NSW might be responsive to an approach from the Federation and Homelessness NSW over social housing management transfers as they raised issues about who would be responsible after the transfers. They also noted there was some confusion in the prison system and amongst prisoners of the roles of public, community and Aboriginal housing providers.

Other initiatives

The Federation can act as an information sharing channel between the community housing providers delivering projects, not just transfers but also Communities Plus and SAHF. Through positive publicity, more future bids might incorporate innovations around housing ex-prisoners.

6.2 Housing supply

Lack of availability of appropriate housing for ex-prisoners is significant issue in NSW.

Box 1: Pathways Home Project

The Federation and Homelessness NSW want to develop a coordinated initiative during 2018 to better accommodate and support ex-prisoners based on key findings in this Report:

- Project design to be co-developed by the two peak bodies along with CRC, FACS and Corrective Services
- Two Social Housing Management Transfer locations to be selected, in areas where transfers will take place early-on, with a prison in the FACS District and where there is a good network of housing and support services
- Clear working protocols to be developed between local prisons and the transferee community housing provider, and SHS providers, including the ability to gain access to prisoners ideally 3 months before release
- New approaches to be co-developed between project partners to coordinate issues facing ex-prisoners in FACS Districts
- The transferee community housing provider to be encouraged to promote Housing First principles for ex-offenders, as well as earmarking (say) 3-5 properties dedicated for ex-prisoners with support provided within the current budgets of SHS providers
- In conjunction with FACS head office, new approaches to be explored for (1) keeping properties available for returning social housing prisoners (2) allowing easier access for inmates to Housing Pathways to either keep their social housing applications current or start new applications
- New approaches to be suggested by the community housing sector to make private rental assistance work better for ex-prisoners
- In conjunction with input from the AHO and Aboriginal housing and support providers, specific plans should be made by the two peak bodies to try and reduce re-offending and increase community reintegration for Aboriginal women
- Both community housing and SHS providers in the project areas to pilot new, improved data collection - including monitoring successful housing and other outcomes for ex-prisoners
- Additional training for community housing, SHS and Corrections staff could be supplied by CRC in the two selected districts, potentially funded by FACS or Corrective Services. Homelessness NSW and the Federation could also develop updated policy and practice guides. The Project to be independently evaluated, with funding sought from Corrective Services
- Information to be made freely available by community housing and SHs providers to inform best practice both in transfer locations and more broadly across NSW.

New supply

NSW needs increased numbers of longer-term properties dedicated to accommodating ex-prisoners. These could be built into future rounds of Communities Plus, the SAHF, or new funding plans mirroring the SA projects for bail hostels and the proposed *New Foundations* dedicated housing supply.

Corrective Services NSW might fund evaluation projects on schemes that aim to reduce re-offending, and have indicated they have monies available for well-considered research and evaluation (see suggestion in Box 1).

Private rentals

Current approaches to TA are expensive, and do not offer sustainable, longer-term accommodation. The Future Directions social housing strategy aims to increase access to private rentals, therefore the Federation could approach FACS to explore innovate solutions that where possible embody Housing First principles.

The FACS invitation on 21 July 2017 for ideas on non-Government organisations receiving \$10 million to support people in crisis or experiencing homelessness, rather than using TA, might provide an opportunity for community housing.

The formerly-funded Platform 70 approach by Bridge Housing could be replicated and used more widely as it minimises landlord opposition to accommodating higher needs people facing homelessness. The aim should be for accommodation to be provided in the longer term, not just transitional.

Another option would be for SHS services to head-lease a multi-occupation property from a community housing provider, with nomination rights for housing for people facing homelessness. This is currently being

discussed by a community housing provider on the Mid-North Coast.

Many community housing providers have established good relationships with local real estate agents. These could be leveraged to assist ex-prisoners to access private rentals, which is often a challenge. Exiting prisoners need a wide range of accommodation options, not just social housing which is severely constrained.

Promoting innovation

The Federation and/or leading community housing providers, could approach private prison operators and the promoters of the On TRACC social benefit bond - including NAB. These relatively well resourced and progressive organisations might be prepared to help fund 'housing first' or other initiatives, and their evaluation.

The team implementing the On TRACC bond is understood to be keen to establish links with community housing providers. This can be achieved through the Federation. Based on research interview, it has a number of interesting features and could help links build between the Federation and Corrective Services.

6.3 System coordination

While coordination works well in some FACS regions, greater consistency is needed across the State.

Going forward, the Federation should continue to support Homelessness NSW to advocate for relevant systemic change. Both organisations should collaborate to create opportunities so that community housing providers can trial Housing First approaches, and offer strategies that support the client group.

Relationship between the Federation, FACS, CRC and Corrective Services

Currently FACS Housing has regular meetings with Corrective Services NSW on housing issues for prisoners such as accessing Housing Pathways. Several pilot projects are underway, for example the Inmate Notification Project. With community housing moving to one third of social housing, the Federation should be involved in these discussions.

The Federation should support the work of Homelessness NSW and others, such as CRC, to bring about systemic change, knowledge building, co-ordination of initiatives, lobbying and annual high-level meeting between CEOs and potentially selected directors of those organisations.

The Federation and Homelessness NSW need direct lines of communication with a senior manager in Corrective Services NSW. For example, new rounds of the Funded Partnerships Initiative (FPI) should be advised to the Federation as their members might apply on their own account or as part of a consortium.

District leadership

Once the results of the Pathways Home Project become known, project champions should be identified to spread knowledge of best practice on strengthening transitions for ex-prisoners. This would help move more districts to collaborative approaches, as seen in Nepean Blue Mountains and Shoalhaven districts.

Within each FACS District, in association with FACS Housing offices, and SHS providers, prisons should be approached and ideally an MoU put in place. This would be an example of community housing providers as 'community anchors'.

MoUs at a local or district level might be more effective than the state-wide approaches seen with the 'Accord'. They should include a commitment to regular 'open days' where housing and support services can help inform prisoners of their options, and protocols for allowing housing officers access to jails.

6.4 Information gathering and exchange

Currently there is limited information gathered on housing and support for ex-prisoners, and communication of what is currently known could be improved.

Knowledge building and sharing

In conjunction with CRC, FACS and Homelessness NSW the Federation could:

- Launch this Report at appropriate community housing and homelessness events
- Coordinate a new wave of training for housing, homelessness and corrections staff across all of NSW. This could be based on feedback after the training is rolled out in the two trial areas as detailed in Box 1. The last training was run by CRC in early 2015
- Produce a tool kit of best practice, delivered through dedicated web pages, hosted by the Federation or CRC
- Establish a *community of practice* for ex-prisoner housing and support. This could span housing, homelessness and corrections
- Develop model clauses to include in each community housing provider's policies around housing ex-prisoners
- Hold specific sessions on housing ex-prisoners at the Federation's annual conference. CRC patron - former justice

Michael Kirby - could be invited as a key-note speaker.

Sector collaboration and lobbying

The Federation should support Homelessness NSW, and others such as CRC, to bring about relevant systemic change for issues affecting people who have been incarcerated, including:

- Within the new homelessness strategy
- Future revisions of GSHS
- Development and implementation of a Housing First strategy
- Maintaining people's place in social housing, or the social housing waiting list
- Improved exit planning and provision of longer term support for people sentenced and on remand in the community

In terms of housing issues, the Federation could lobby FACS and Corrective Services for streamlining the applications for, and remaining on, Housing Pathways while in prison. A degree of discretion and flexibility needs to be built into the system.

Data and transparency

There are several evaluations highlighted in this Report that are not in the public domain. Corrective Services NSW have been supportive in allowing access to one of these, and potentially further requests could be made to FACS over reports they hold.

The Federation and Homelessness NSW could partner with FACS and Corrective Services to work to build a clearer picture of the housing tenure of prisoners on entry, and well as for new data to be collected on housing tenure of exit from prison.

Proposals in Box 1 suggest piloting new data collection approaches in two selected transfer areas. Once these are evaluated,

they should be rolled-out across all FACS Districts.

Further research

Data collection, interviews and e-Surveys for this project raised several issues which have not been covered in detail due to constraints on the project budget. These include:

- Specific recommendations for higher needs groups leaving prison. Research indicates the greatest challenges face:
 - Indigenous people (especially Indigenous women)
 - Women (especially single women with children)
 - Sex offenders
 - Perpetrators and victims of domestic and family violence
- This project did not survey or interview Aboriginal community housing providers. This should be addressed by a new project, starting with a workshop involving the AHO, Aboriginal housing and support service providers and the peak bodies for community housing and homelessness
- More information could be obtained on the potential shortfall in accommodation for people in NSW exiting prison. In which locations is the housing most needed, and what is the ideal mix between crisis, transitional and permanent accommodation?
- Research could be commissioned on how the policy of keeping social housing open for 3/6 months while a person is in prison, and the tenancy reinstatement policy, work in practice amongst community housing providers. Are housing organisations consistently advised by Corrective Services NSW when a tenant is incarcerated? Do housing providers follow the policies?

Attachment: Interviewees

The following people were interviewed in person or by phone between July and September 2017:

Community housing providers

- Kerry Dolaghan, Community Service Manager, and Jenny Ranft, Divisional Manager Community Services. Wentworth Community Housing
- Penny Dordoy. Head of Community Services, Housing Plus
- Deborah Georgopolous, CEO, and Deborah Venables, Manager Women's Homelessness Services. Women's Housing Company
- Barb McKenna, General Manager Customers and Communities, Carrie Levine, Employment and Opportunities Manager, and Bruce Woodhouse, Projects Manager, SGCH
- John McKenna, CEO, and Harriet Brummelhuis, Operations General Manager. North Coast Community Housing
- Wendy Middleton. CEO, Argyle Housing

SHS providers

- David Allen. Executive Manager Community and Family Care, Wesley Mission
- Eleanor Booth. Senior Functional Manager, OnTRACC
- Suzan Delavere. Service Manager, Domestic Violence Services Management

- Felix Delhomme. Social Justice Officer, St. Vincent de Paul and University of Sydney, Researcher
- Jonathan Martin. Manager. Glebe House
- Kate McGarry. Executive Manager, Anglicare SA, about the BASP project
- Mindy Sotiri. Program Director, CRC
- Jess Wilson. Acting Service Excellence Manager, New Horizons
- Kathy Williams, House with no Steps, about Dillwynia Shared Access Trial

Public agencies and peak bodies

- Lynne Bevan. Manager Housing Policy Quality and Review, FACS
- Fiona Byrne, Manager Partnerships and Community Engagement, and Kelly-Ann Stewart, Principal Advisor Women Offenders. Corrective Services NSW
- Nina Knott, Manager Tenancy Services Shoalhaven, FACS
- Adell Hyslop, Aboriginal Project Officer, Federation - about Aboriginal ex-prisoner issues
- Catherine Brennan. CEO, Women's Justice Network

Other interviewees

- Richard Smith. Business Development Director - Justice, SERCO

Short discussions, information gathering

- Merinda Dutton. Solicitor, Legal Aid NSW

- Leigh Garrett. CEO, OARS SA
- Deborah Georgiou. Head of Policy and Communication, Federation
- Jon Park. Client Services Manager, Yes
- Karen Walsh. Formerly FACS and SGCH
- Matthew Woodward. CEO, Unity Housing SA

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