



## Ex-prisoners, homelessness and the state in Australia

**Author/Contributor:**

Baldry, Eileen; McDonnell, Desmond; Maplestone, Peter; Peeters, Manu

**Publication details:**

Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology

v. 39

Chapter No. 1

pp. 20-33

0004-8658 (ISSN)

**Publication Date:**

2006

**Publisher DOI:**

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1375/acri.39.1.20>

**License:**

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/au/>

Link to license to see what you are allowed to do with this resource.

Downloaded from <http://hdl.handle.net/1959.4/11451> in <https://unsworks.unsw.edu.au> on 2023-03-30

---

# Ex-Prisoners, Homelessness and the State in Australia

---

Eileen Baldry

*University of New South Wales, Australia*

Desmond McDonnell

*RMIT University, Australia*

Peter Maplestone

*University of New South Wales, Australia*

Manu Peeters

*RMIT University, Australia*

Australia, with other OECD countries, has experienced a rapid rise in numbers of prison releasees. With this, there is heightened interest in the social impact of more prisoners returning to the community. International research has consistently indicated that suitable housing is a vital factor in ex-prisoners' social integration. This project investigated whether and to what extent ex-prisoner housing and associated social factors are important to integration in Australia, specifically New South Wales and Victoria, where no reliable prior research on this matter had been done. Analyses indicated significant differences between states; chronic homelessness, poverty and lack of support in the participants' lives; and that accommodation instability is a predictor of return to prison. Justice system policy implications are discussed.

The social integration of ex-prisoners has become a topic of renewed interest as prisoner numbers in most countries have risen rapidly over the past decade with a concomitant rise in numbers of releasees. High recidivism rates indicate that many ex-prisoners have not benefited from rehabilitative processes during their time in prison and are not successful in the transition back into the community. Housing and other social factors have been shown in international research, as discussed below, to be crucial to successful transition. There is little information available on this matter in Australia. This article reports the findings of the first research project investigating this matter with a consecutive sample of Australian male and female releasees. The association between the iterative homelessness and severe social exclusion experienced by ex-prisoners and reincarceration, as uncovered in this research, provides a powerful critique of the late 20th to early 21st centuries' rush to imprison.

---

Address for correspondence: Eileen Baldry, PhD, Senior Lecturer, School of Social Work, University of New South Wales, NSW 2052, Australia. E-mail: e.baldry@unsw.edu.au

### The Australian Context

There were over 23,552 prisoners (sentenced and unsentenced) on census day in Australia in 2003, an increase of 50% over the preceding decade, with approximately 8880 in New South Wales (NSW) and 3760 in Victoria (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004). By far the majority of full-time prisoners received into the prison system in the two states each year is on a short sentence (that is, under 12 months). They are thus unlikely to be on supervised parole and therefore without established contact or support in the community postrelease. A significant minority serves a long sentence, and is released without parole due to restrictions on the granting of parole for certain categories of prisoners. The census count, though, does not give a realistic picture of the 'flow-through' numbers of prisoners entering and being released from Australian prisons over the period of a year. There are no reliable data on numbers of prisoners being released into the community each year, but the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services' (FaCS) estimates suggested in 2001 there were over 43,000 Australia-wide (Andersen, 2001).

In Victoria and NSW, Correctional Services fund or partly fund a very small amount of postrelease support (excluding the Probation and Parole Service), with NSW, for example, directing only 0.3% of its budget to community-based postrelease programs (NSW Department of Corrective Services, 2001). Departments of Housing, Health and Community/Human Services and Centrelink (the social security provider in Australia) are involved in providing services but until 2002 none had clearly defined policy aims and objectives or practices regarding housing for people being released from prison.

A small number of nongovernment organisations (NGOs) provide a limited amount of housing support. At the time of this research (2002–2003) there were about 50 places each in NSW and Victoria designated for ex-prisoners. The Victorian and NSW governments have begun a number of pilot postrelease service initiatives since 2002. Interim findings in Victoria indicate better outcomes for ex-prisoners in these programs compared to those not in such programs (Aktepe & Lake, 2003).

### Previous Studies on Ex-Prisoners and Housing

Baldry, McDonnell, Maplestone and Peeters (2003) provided an overview of literature, including Australian work, in this field. They follow Paylor (1995) in suggesting that the international and Australian literature is still characterised by a paucity of studies. There is a lack of empirical studies of housing issues faced by ex-prisoners, and a lack of theoretical insight into the impact of unstable and inappropriate housing on postprison reintegration and associated reincarceration.

Nevertheless, such literature points consistently to a strong association between ex-prisoners, poor accommodation and lack of social integration. A large minority of ex-prisoners does not have suitable accommodation upon release, and it has been argued that structural factors are fundamental to ex-prisoners being able to gain and maintain suitable housing (Banks & Fairhead, 1976; Corden, Kuipers, & Wilson, 1978; Corden & Clifton, 1983; Ramsay, 1986).

Overall, the literature suggests poor prerelease arrangements resulting in inadequate, unsupported accommodation postrelease for many releasees. Those with

mental illness or intellectual disability, young unattached males on short sentences and single women with children are particularly vulnerable to poor housing on being released. It is argued that close coordination among agencies and a greater variety of housing types with support, not just ex-prisoner hostels, are required to begin to address postrelease housing problems. (Carlisle, 1996; Carnaby, 1998; Minnesota Department of Corrections, 2001; NACRO, 1992, 1993; Paylor, 1995; Travis, Solomon, & Waul, 2001; Solomon, Waul, Van Ness, & Travis, 2004; UK Cabinet Office Social Exclusion Unit, 2001; UK Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, Rough Sleepers Unit, 2001).

### **Literature on Related Issues**

Studies into the relationship between social issues and difficulties for prisoners such as homelessness (Benda, 1983; Conway, 1999; De Li, 2000; McCarthy & Hagen, 1991; Stark, 1994; Vitelli, 1993), mental illness/disturbance (Belcher, 1988; Harrington, 1999; NACRO, 1992), intellectual disability (Hayes, 1991, 1996; Lyall et al., 1995; Simpson, Martin, & Green, 2001) and disadvantageous geographical location (Minnesota Department of Corrections, 2001; Vinson, 1999) have indicated a high level of difficulty for these persons in securing suitable accommodation upon release. These studies also indicate that there is a higher rate of incarceration of persons with these problems than in the general population. The factors just discussed, along with others such as unemployment, are interactive with and interdependent upon each other. Similar problems exist for indigenous Australians (Jonas, 2003) and women, especially sole carers of children and those with a drug problem (NSW Legislative Council, 2001; Slowinski, 2001).

The current provisions for ex-prisoners with particular problems or in minority groups (such as all those groups just mentioned) are reported to be seriously insufficient. This is supported by recent Inquiries and reports in NSW (New South Wales Legislative Council Standing Committee on Law and Justice, 2000; NSW Legislative Council, 2001; NSW Legislative Council, 2002).

### **The Research Method**

The research being reported here gathered data from Australian ex-prisoners about housing and other social matters and their experiences postrelease. Originally, 201 prisoners in NSW and 155 in Victoria were interviewed prerelease after ethics approval had been granted and prisoners from the main releasing prisons, who were about to be released, had volunteered to be participants. Prerelease interviews were conducted over a 3-month period from late 2001 to early 2002. This provided a consecutive sample of prisoners being released from the 14 prisons included in the research. Seven of the original interviewees in NSW and 10 in Victoria subsequently were found to be ineligible, as they were not released when expected. Thus 194 participants (130 male and 64 female) in NSW and 145 (122 male and 23 female) in Victoria — 339 in all — were included in the prerelease sample and were followed up postrelease. Subsequent interviews were held at 3, 6 and 9 months postrelease. If the person was back in prison, interviews were held there. At the end of the 9-month interview period, 238 participants — 145 in NSW and 93 in

Victoria — had been interviewed or had information gathered regarding their postrelease experience. They represent 70% of the original sample.

Interviews consisted of mainly closed and some open-ended questions. Data gathered included participants' demographic information, pre- and postprison housing and social situation and social progress after release with open-ended questions regarding their view on how well they were doing and what helped or did not help their postrelease integration. Although interpreting services were made available, few prisoners whose English language level was very poor had volunteered. Prisoners being released from special units such as forensic or intellectual disability units were not included. The sample included all those being released over the 3-month period from general releasing prisons who were willing to participate, not just those on parole or who were attached to postrelease services.

The data were subjected to statistical analyses (tests of significance and regression analysis) using SPSS for Windows 11 to determine association of factors. Some participants did not answer all questions, hence the differing sample numbers in some tables. The combined set was disaggregated into NSW and Victorian data to test for significant differences between the two states. The calculation of the significance of the associations is based on chi-square. Whenever in the presentation of results, an association is reported as 'significant' it means the chi-square value has been calculated as  $p < .05$ . Logistic regression analysis was applied to factors that emerged as significant. Qualitative information was analysed thematically.

### The sample

Features of the participants from the prerelease interview were:

- 75% male, 25% female
- 16% Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- 66% imprisoned previously
- 82% had just served sentences of 12 months or less with 53% 6 months or less
- 75% had not completed secondary school with most not completing year 10
- 73% in NSW, 58% in Victoria said they were given no information on accommodation or support prerelease
- 20% in NSW and 12% in Victoria were in primary homelessness (literally without shelter) prior to imprisonment
- 16% expected to be homeless or did not know where they were going postrelease
- 24% were in family accommodation prior to imprisonment, but 36% expected to be with their family postrelease
- 38% of female and 21% of male participants were in public housing prior to imprisonment
- 40% of males were expecting to live in their family's house postrelease, compared to 27% prior to imprisonment
- 67% of men expected to be with parents/partner postrelease, whereas only 32% of the women expected to be.

Of women participants, women sole parents ( $n = 37$ ) made up 50% of those in short-term public housing, 20% in priority public housing, 50% in long-term public housing and 67% of the homeless women prior to imprisonment. They expected the same postrelease. Thirty-five per cent had been employed in some fashion prior to incarceration and 76% did not expect to, or did not know whether they would, be employed postrelease.

The above results confirm the extreme precariousness most releasees experienced in relation to housing, family relations, employment and participating in society prior to imprisonment. The demographic profile of the reinterviewed sample of postrelease participants showed no significant differences from the larger prerelease sample.

### Definition of Homelessness

Chamberlain and MacKenzie's (1992) concept of 'primary homelessness' is used as the definition of homelessness because it accorded with participants' use of the term. Primary homelessness refers to being without conventional accommodation (living on the streets, in cars, in squats). When participants said they were homeless they meant it in the most fundamental sense — they had no proper shelter. Had all three of Chamberlain and MacKenzie's definitions of homelessness been applied, that is primary (as stated), 'secondary' as transient accommodation and 'tertiary' as medium-to long-term accommodation but without the security of a lease — most of the sample would have been homeless postrelease.

### Findings

Although staying out of prison postrelease is a gross and not necessarily accurate measure of social integration, it is an indication that an ex-prisoner is managing socially and economically to some extent. It is also one of the only readily available and fairly reliable measures on releasees' progress. Thus, return to prison is used as the dependent variable in most of the analyses. 'Reincarcerated' and 'return to prison' are used interchangeably, mainly for variety. All percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

### Accommodation Moves

The releasees were asked at each 3-month interview how many times they had moved in the past 3 months or since the last interview. As most participants were not interviewed at all three postrelease interview points, the information about moves is likely to be on the conservative side. Of the 226 participants who gave such information, 114 (50%) did not move at all or moved only once and 110 (50%) moved two or more times, with 16% moving more than four times.

Of those who did not move or moved just once, only 22% had been reincarcerated at 9 months, whereas of those who moved twice or more 59% were back in prison, a statistically significant difference,  $\chi^2(1) = 32.2, p < .001$ . This extremely high mobility is indicative of homelessness. On the whole, participants said they moved because they had to, not because they chose to. This trend was evident early in the postrelease period. Those who were in unstable housing circumstances were more likely to return to prison at each stage that interviews were undertaken.

**TABLE 1**

Number of Moves Postrelease

Moves	0 or 1	2 or more	Total
Not returned	89 (78%)	46 (41%)	91
Returned prison	25 (22%)	66 (59%)	135
Total	114	112	226

Those who had not been imprisoned previously were less likely to move often postrelease (41%) than those who had been imprisoned before (53%).

### Increase in Homelessness

Overall homelessness for participants increased from 18% (61/339) prior to incarceration to 21% postrelease (49/229).

Although this is not a significant increase, there was a significant relationship,  $\chi^2(1) = 11, p < .001$ , between being homeless and being reincarcerated (Table 2).

When analysed by state, the rate of homelessness for the NSW participants had increased when compared with the preincarceration rate (from 20% to 28%). By contrast, Victorian participants' homelessness rate was reduced (12% to 8%).

Closer analysis of the 6-month figures revealed that the number of homeless had almost doubled in NSW (from 20% to 38% of the sample). It is clear from the data that participants moved in and out of primary homelessness. In other words, perhaps up to half of the participants (given the 'number of moves' finding) experienced episodes of homelessness. Additionally, highly unstable accommodation, such as sleeping on a friend's sofa, was not counted by participants as being homeless despite the fact that it is understood to be so in homelessness research (Chamberlain & Mackenzie, 1992). Participants did not think of themselves as homeless if they had a bed for a few nights. Thus a number who do not appear in the homelessness category were effectively homeless or were moving in and out of homelessness.

### Who Participants Were Living With

Of the 41% of those living with their parents, partner or other family member only 23% returned to prison, but 52% of those living with others — friends or acquaintances — or alone returned to prison.

**TABLE 2**

Type of Housing Postrelease

Type of housing	Homeless	Other	Total
Not returned	19 (39%)	117 (65%)	136
Returned	30 (61%)	63 (35%)	93
Total	49	180	229

**TABLE 3**

## Living With Postrelease

Living with	Parents/family	Others/alone	Total
Not returned	72 (77%)	64 (48%)	136
Returned	22 (23%)	70 (52%)	92
Total	94	134	228

These differences are significant,  $\chi^2(1) = 19.1, p < .001$ . In this matter, NSW and Victoria diverged significantly. In NSW, the majority (60%) of those who expected or hoped to be living with their parents were not doing so at 9 months postrelease. In Victoria, a significantly larger percentage (44%) than in NSW (18%) was still living with parents at 9 months postrelease. Staying with parents and other close family appears to be associated with stability, not having to move and staying out of prison.

**Gender**

Women were deliberately overrepresented in the sample because, if they had been included according to their numbers in prison (7%), there would not have been the numbers to perform valid statistical analyses. Women participants (87 of the 339 participants) were more likely to return to prison over the 9-month study period than their male counterparts. Of the men in the sample 78 (31%) returned to prison whereas 37 (43%) women returned.

This is a significant result,  $\chi^2(1) = 3.9, p < .05$ . Women appear to have had greater problems than their male counterparts securing suitable accommodation. Proportionally far fewer were living with parents, partners or close family than the men were. On average, these women did not represent a more criminally concentrated group (that is, they were not serving longer sentences nor were they convicted of more serious offences than their male counterparts), which may have explained their higher return rate. According to the prerelease data women were more socially disadvantaged rather than being involved in more serious crime than the men.

**TABLE 4**

## Gender Returned Postrelease

Gender	Male	Female	Total
Not returned	174 (69%)	50 (57%)	224
Returned	78 (31%)	37 (43%)	115
Total	252	87	339



**TABLE 5**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Returned Postrelease

A & TSI	A & TSI	Not A & TSI	Total
Not returned	28 (49%)	196 (69%)	224
Returned	29 (51%)	86 (31%)	115
Total	57	282	339

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders

There were 57 indigenous Australian participants. Of these, 29 (or 51%) had been reincarcerated by the 9-month point, whereas only 31% of the nonindigenous sample had been returned to prison, a significant difference,  $\chi^2(1) = 8.8, p < .01$ .

Of those Aboriginal participants returned to prison, 23 were from NSW and six from Victoria. Thus each state saw a return rate of 51% (the same as the combined rate) for indigenous Australians. Indigenous women represented almost half of the indigenous sample. The women returned to prison at a greater rate than indigenous men, with 68% of the indigenous women back in prison at 9 months compared with 36% of the indigenous men, accounting for the higher return rate of indigenous participants. None of the indigenous participants had lived in a stable family home postrelease and there was reliance on public and publicly assisted housing. Most women were unable to secure public housing upon release due to debt and being in poor standing with the Housing Authority. Almost all moved more than once each 3 months, with most moving a number of times but the moves were between the same few places. There was a strong trend towards poorer housing and living alone with 80% of those few still out of prison living alone at the 9-month interview. Half of those indigenous participants out of prison at 9 months were homeless.

### Other Factors Relevant to Housing

Of the 226 participants who provided information on indebtedness, 116 (51%) said they had a debt of some sort. Those with a debt were more likely to return to prison (50%) than those who had no debt (30%), a statistically significant result,  $\chi^2(1) = 9.4, p < .01$ . Of those with a debt, 35 (30%) had a Public Housing debt and, of these participants, 22 (63%) returned to prison compared with 45% of those with other forms of debt. This takes on more importance when family accommodation, which is the type of housing most associated with staying out, is removed from the data, because those in long-term public and assisted rental housing were significantly more likely,  $\chi^2(1) = 6.0, p < .025$ , to stay out of prison than those in other forms of housing such as crisis, short-term, hostel or nonassisted rental places (66% and 47% respectively).

Participants also reported whether their accommodation was suitable for them. Of those who said it was unsuitable (119 persons), 55% returned to prison. This is compared with the 25 (24%) of those who said it was suitable and who returned to prison, a significant difference,  $\chi^2(1) = 23.2, p < .001$ . In other words, ex-prisoners' own estimation of the suitability of their accommodation may be a reliable guide to

whether it is, a possibility that would be worth verifying by independent assessment in future studies. Those who stated their accommodation was unsuitable were also significantly more likely,  $\chi^2(1) = 8.5, p < .01$ , to have been incarcerated before.

Participants came from, went back to, and/or called home a small number of disadvantaged suburbs and towns in both NSW and Victoria (based on Vinson's 1999 ranking). This is another area of difference between NSW and Victoria. In NSW, by far the majority of participants came from and went back to a very small number of clustered suburbs and towns in eight areas in the south-west and west of Sydney, the Newcastle and Wollongong area and in three places on the north coast, and in the west of NSW. Although a majority in Victoria came from and went back to suburbs and towns that were disadvantaged, they were not as clustered as in NSW. Half of the NSW indigenous participants had come from and returned to two clusters of suburbs in Sydney.

Any support associated with housing postrelease was investigated with 151 saying they received some support, mainly moral with other forms being financial, social and counselling. Participants' self-assessment as to whether the support was helpful, like the suitability of their accommodation, was highly correlated with recidivism. Only 14 (18%) who said the support was helpful returned to prison, whereas 52 (69%) of those who said it was unhelpful returned to prison. These differences are statistically significant,  $\chi^2(1) = 39.8, p < .001$ . In other words, ex-prisoners are well aware of the helpfulness or otherwise of the kind of support they are receiving.

### Agency Contact

Only 22 (10%) of the 224 participants who answered the question regarding contact with agencies postrelease said they had no contact at all. These 22 were removed from the calculations and the specialised postrelease agencies (the parole service in each state and three ex-prisoner agencies in NSW and five in Victoria) were joined together and compared to all other agencies combined (Centrelink, generic housing, refuge, homeless, counselling and support services, Human and Community Services). Those who had contact with the specialist postrelease agencies were significantly less likely,  $\chi^2(1) = 6.8, p < .01$ , to return to prison, with only 24% of those in contact with specialist services returning, compared to 45% of those in contact only with other agencies. Yet again, ex-prisoners' own assessments of the helpfulness of agencies were associated with returning to prison, with only 20% of those who said it was helpful returning compared with 59% of those who said it was not returning to prison.

### Employment

Some in the sample were not looking for paid work, or were incapable, due to disabilities or other factors of acquiring a job. When those who were not seeking or not able to work were removed from the sample, there were 142 participants seeking work or full-time student activity. Thirty-six (25%) of those were employed or students, and 106 (75%) were unemployed and seeking work. Of the unemployed seeking work group, 54% were back in prison compared to 8% of those employed or students, the differences being statistically significant,  $\chi^2(1) = 22.7, p < .001$ .

When the employment figures are dis-aggregated by state a very different picture emerges. Of the 36 employed or full-time students 26 were from Victoria meaning that only 10 (7%) of the NSW sample had employment or were full-time students. There is a positive association between the Victorian participants who had employment also having stable housing and staying out of prison (only one of those 26 Victorians returned to prison). There was also a clear positive connection between suitable housing, managing drug problems and employment.

### Drug Use

Participants were asked to rate their alcohol and other drug use according to a simple scale — not a problem, hardly a problem, a medium problem, a serious problem — before release and at each interview postrelease. Alcohol or other drug use was associated with return to prison by participants. Importantly, it was also commonly associated with lack of support and of stable housing and having to live or stay in unsuitable accommodation and localities. Participants were asked about alcohol, heroin, speed and other drugs (marijuana, cocaine, pills). The results were similar indicating the worse the drug problem, the more likely the person was to be returned to prison; with the associations, using heroin as the example, being significant,  $\chi^2(1) = 42.3, p < .001$ . For example, 84% of those who said heroin was an increasingly serious problem returned to prison whereas only 30% of those who said it was hardly a problem returned.

### Predictor of Return to Prison

To examine the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable (returning to prison), a step-wise logistic regression analysis was used. Those factors most likely to be predictive due to their significant association with returning to prison, indicated in the previous univariate analyses, were selected to be included in the logistic regression analysis. However, participant assessments of suitability of housing and support were excluded, as they were self-reported and there were doubts about their validity. In addition, employment was not entered into the model, although it was protective of reincarceration in the univariate analysis. This was because it was measured inconsistently, and its inclusion would have given a misleading assessment of the influence of employment on the likelihood of individuals returning to prison in the sample as a whole. The factors included in the final regression are presented in Table 6. The method of selection of the variables included in the regression was 'enter', a minimally restrictive method for the selection of variables in logistic regression models which is used in studies with small sample sizes (Katz, 1999). The overall significance of the model was  $\chi^2(6) = 74.4, p < .0001$ , indicating that the logistic regression model was a stronger predictor of reincarceration than chance.

Controlling for sex, who participants were living with, the type of housing they had (homeless or otherwise), worsening heroin use and debt, people who moved often were between two and eight times more likely to be reincarcerated. Thus, moving often was the only predictor out of the three housing variables in the regression which was significant. Being transient is not an illegal activity and the fact that it appears, from this analysis, to be a predictor of reincarceration is of serious concern.

**TABLE 6**  
Logistic Regression — Predictors of Return to Prison

		Variables in the equation					95% CI for EXP(B)		
		B	SE	Wald	df	sig.	Exp(B)	Lower	Upper
Step	sex(1)	.525	.365	2.071	1	.150	1.690	.827	3.454
1 <sup>a</sup>	livwreco(1)	.399	.388	1.056	1	.304	1.490	.696	3.187
	typehrec(1)	-.001	.446	.000	1	.999	.999	.417	2.397
	debtreco(1)	.443	.368	1.446	1	.229	1.557	.757	3.202
	movreco(1)	-1.410	.366	14.848	1	.000	.244	.119	.500
	heroirec(1)	-2.384	.483	24.335	1	.000	.092	.036	.238
	Constant	.844	.530	2.538	1	.111	2.325	—	—

Note: <sup>a</sup> Variable(s) entered on Step 1: sex, livwreco, typehrec, debtreco, movreco, heroirec.  
Variables: sex of participant; livwreco = who living with; typehrec = type of housing; debtreco = debt; movreco = moving often; heroirec = worsening heroin use.

Controlling for sex, who participants were living with, the type of housing they had (homeless or otherwise), debt and moving often, people with worsening heroin use were between 4 and 28 times more likely to be reincarcerated. As heroin use is illegal, this is not a surprising finding. Also, as noted earlier, participants themselves said worsening drug use was often associated with unsuitable accommodation so these factors are likely to be interactive.

## Discussion

For the first time in Australia the results provide statistically valid and reliable data about a general sample of people being released from NSW and Victorian prisons.

Deterioration in participants' circumstances, in particular returning to prison, is significantly associated with and is predicted by their 'moving often'. As seen in the findings, participants who moved often were also moving in and out of homelessness — parent's house to the street to a friend's sofa to a homeless shelter. This is best described and understood as being in a 'state of homelessness'. Having been incarcerated before, lack of family support or professional assistance that ex-prisoners retrospectively judged to be helpful, lack of employment or study opportunities, being concentrated in disadvantaged communities and worsening drug use are all also associated with poor housing and returning to prison. Just addressing one of these problems, such as heroin use, without addressing housing problems was recognised by participants as unhelpful. The research findings also highlighted the reliance on short prison sentences to address what are essentially social and systemic problems.

One of the reasons Victorian participants fared better than those in NSW may be the fact that the rate of imprisonment is half that of NSW and therefore the proportional impact on communities supporting returning ex-prisoners is less, and Victoria had begun fairly large trials of postrelease support. Additionally, in broad policy terms:

- the increasing scarcity of long-term public and social housing in areas where there are education and employment opportunities for poor and disadvantaged members of society
- the increasing use of private rental properties as a solution to housing poverty in an unregulated rental market
- the lack of consistent support pre- and postrelease
- the lack of affordable housing

are all more marked in NSW.

The impact of these systemic factors, as seen in the research findings, results in many releasees having little social capacity and few housing options to support their transition to the community. These depletions in resources and alienation from community are then, for most ex-prisoners, compounded by a further prison sentence. This cycle of losing capacity began very quickly upon release for about half of the participants.

It is clear from this study that individual releasees do not have the resources to address the multiple and compounded difficulties just discussed, most of which are strongly related to institutional policies and practices. Reduction in poor communities of publicly provided transport, affordable decent housing, employment, health services — especially drug and alcohol services, relevant education services, and legal aid leaves those, like ex-prisoners, who cannot afford to participate in private market solutions, without capacity to address these exclusions. It is also evident from these findings that the approach taken by many prison and justice authorities whereby prisoner failure to re-enter society is seen as a problem reducible to an individual's criminogenic lifestyle (for example, see Chapman & Hough, 1999; NSW Department of Corrective Services, 2003) is completely inadequate. Szreter's (2002) argument, that any attempt to build social capital will fail if tackled at just a local community and family level, is relevant in this context. He posits that it must be linked to, and in ideological concert with, state infrastructure and participatory government. The institutional supports discussed earlier can only be maintained by a well-functioning and adequately funded state that provides the framework for social, agency and family support in which ex-prisoners can work to establish and integrate themselves in their community. To not ensure these resources locks the majority of ex-prisoners into the reincarceration cycle just discussed.

## References

- Aktepe, B., & Lake, P. (2003). The THM—Corrections pathways initiative. *Parity 16(5)*, insert.
- Andersen, J. (2000). *Crisis payment & prisoner statistics* (Internal Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services paper). Canberra: FACS.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2004). *Prisoners in Australia 2003*. Commonwealth of Australia, Catalogue No. 4517.0.
- Baldry, E., McDonnell, D., Maplestone, P., & Peeters, M. (2003). Australian prisoners' post-release housing. *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, 15(2), 155–169.
- Banks, C., & Fairhead, S. (1976). *The petty short-term prisoner*. London: Barry Rose Publishers.
- Belcher, J. (1988). Are jails replacing the mental health system for the homeless mentally ill? *Community Mental Health Journal*, 24(3), 185–195.

## EX-PRISONERS, HOMELESSNESS AND THE STATE IN AUSTRALIA

- Benda, B. (1983). Predictors of arrest and service use among the homeless: Logit analyses. *Psychosocial Rehabilitation Journal*, 17(2), 145–161.
- Carlisle, J. (1996). *The housing needs of ex-prisoners: Research report*. York: University of York Centre for Housing Policy.
- Carnaby, H. (1998). *Road to nowhere: A report on the housing and support needs of women leaving prison in Victoria*. Melbourne: Flat Out Inc.
- Chamberlain, C., & MacKenzie, D. (1992). Understanding contemporary homelessness: Issues of definitions and meaning. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 27(4), 274–297.
- Chapman, T., & Hough, M. (1999). *Evidence based practice: A guide to effective practice*. London: Home Office.
- Conway, J. (1999). *Housing needs of prisoners and their families in Queensland: Issues paper*. Brisbane: Queensland Department of Housing.
- Corden, J. (1983). Persistent petty offenders: Problems and patterns of multiple disadvantage. *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, XXII, 68–90.
- Corden, J., Kuipers, J., & Wilson, K. (1978). After prison: A study of the post-release experiences of discharged prisoners. *Papers in Community Studies* No 21. York: University of York.
- DeLisi, M. (2000). Who is more dangerous? Comparing the criminality of adult homeless and domiciled jail inmates: A research note. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 44(1), 59–69.
- Harrington, S. (1999). New bedlam: Jails—not psychiatric hospitals—now care for the indigent mentally ill. *The Humanist*, 59(3), 9–10.
- Hayes, S. (1991). Pilot prison programs. *Australia and New Zealand Journal of Developmental Disabilities*, 17(2), 209–216.
- Hayes, S. (1996). *People with an intellectual disability and the criminal justice system: Two rural courts* (New South Wales Law Reform Commission Research Report 5). Sydney: NSW Law Reform Commission.
- Jonas, B. (2003). *Discrimination against indigenous peoples in the justice system—examples, experiences, and governmental, administrative and judicial measures to ensure equitable justice system*. Retrieved July 15, 2004, from <http://www.unhchr.ch/indigenous/backgroundpapers.htm>
- Katz, M. (1999). *Multivariable analysis: A practical guide for clinicians*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Lyall, I., Holland, A., Collins, S., & Styles, P. (1995). Incidence of persons with a learning disability detained in police custody: A needs assessment for service development. *Medicine Science and Law*, 35(1), 61–71.
- McCarthy, B., & Hagen, J. (1991). Homelessness: A criminogenic situation? *British Journal of Criminology*, 31(4), 393–410.
- Minnesota Department of Corrections. (2001). *Safe homes safe communities*. St Paul, MN: Minnesota Department of Corrections.
- NACRO. (1992). *Revolving doors: Report of the telethon inquiry into the relationship between mental health, homelessness and criminal justice*. London: NACRO.
- NACRO. (1993). *Opening the doors: A report from NACRO's national policy on resettlement*. London: NACRO.
- New South Wales Legislative Council Standing Committee on Law and Justice. (2000). *Crime prevention through social support: Second report, Parliamentary Paper No 437*. Sydney: NSW Parliament.
- NSW Department of Corrective Services. (2001). *Community funding programs: Three year vision (2001/2–2003/4)*. Sydney: NSW Dept of Corrective Services.
- NSW Department of Corrective Services. (2003, December). *National report on contemporary issues in corrections, 23rd Asian and Pacific Conference of Correctional Administrators, Hong Kong*.

- NSW Legislative Council. (2001). *Select Committee on the increase in prisoner population: Final report*. Sydney: NSW Parliament.
- NSW Legislative Council. (2002). *Inquiry into mental health services in NSW: Final report*. Sydney: NSW Parliament.
- Paylor, I. (1995). *Housing needs of ex-offenders*. Aldershot: Avebury.
- Ramsay, M. (1986). Housing for the homeless ex-offender: Key findings from a literature review. *Research Bulletin*, 20, 57–60.
- Simpson, J., Martin, M., & Green, J. (2001). *The framework report*. Sydney: NSW Council for Intellectual Disability.
- Slowinski, K. (2001). *A study of crisis accommodation and support needs of women exiting custody in the Adelaide metropolitan region*. Adelaide: Service Development Branch, South Australian Government.
- Solomon, A.L., Waul, M., Van Ness, A., & Travis, J. (2004). *Outside the walls: A national snapshot of community-based prisoner re-entry programs*. Retrieved July 16, 2004, from <http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=410911>
- Stark, L. (1994). The shelter as "total institution": An organizational barrier to remedying homelessness. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 37, 553–563.
- Szreter, S. (2002). The state of social capital; bringing back in power, politics and history. *Theory and Society*, 31, 612–622.
- Travis, J., Solomon, A.L., & Waul, M. (2001). *From prison to home: The dimensions and consequences of prisoner re-entry*. Retrieved July 16, 2004, from the Urban Institute web site: [http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/from\\_prison\\_to\\_home.pdf](http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/from_prison_to_home.pdf)
- UK Cabinet Office Social Exclusion Unit. (2001). *Submissions to the reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners project*. London: Cabinet Office.
- UK Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions Rough Sleepers Unit. (2001). *Blocking the fast track from prison to rough sleeping*. London: DETR.
- Vinson, T. (1999). *Unequal in life: The distribution of social disadvantage in Victoria and New South Wales*. Melbourne: Jesuit Social Services.
- Vitelli, R. (1993). The homeless inmate in a maximum security prison setting. *Canadian Journal of Criminology*, 35, 323–331.
-