

University of Sydney Policy Reform Project

Research Paper for Legal Aid NSW: *Increasing Supports for Vulnerable People Leaving Custody Who Are at Risk of Reoffending*

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional custodianship and law of the Country on which the University of Sydney campuses stand, in particular the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. We pay our respects to those who have cared and continue to care for Country, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past, present and emerging. Sovereignty was never ceded. It always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

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Policy Brief

Paper	Topic	Academic Supervisor
6LANSW	Increasing supports for vulnerable people leaving custody who are at risk of re-offending	Professor Azrini Wahidin

About Legal Aid NSW

Legal Aid NSW is an independent statutory body established under the *Legal Aid Commission Act 1979* (NSW). We provide legal services across New South Wales through a state-wide network of 25 offices and 243 regular outreach locations, with a particular focus on the needs of people who are socially and economically disadvantaged. Our services range from legal information, education, advice, minor assistance, dispute resolution and duty services, through to an extensive litigation practice.

Legal Aid NSW assists those facing incarceration and many prisoners with legal matters. Our criminal law division provides specialised advice and representation through our Prisoners Legal Service which provides representation in hearings at the State Parole Authority and related Supreme Court proceedings, prison discipline offences before Magistrates, and reviews of segregation. Through our advice services, we provide free advice and assistance in matters such as bail, legal aid, appeals, parole, and classification and other prison issues. Consequently, Legal Aid NSW provides a holistic and wide-ranging variety of services for those affected by the criminal justice system.

Background:

In New South Wales 43.6 percent of adults released from custody in 2022 reoffended within the following 12 months.¹ In the case of young people, that figure is significantly higher, with 73.6 percent of young people released from custody re-offending.²

¹ NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, *Reoffending Statistics for NSW* (online, 22 May 2024) <[Re-offending \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.bcsr.nsw.gov.au)>.

² Ibid.

A significant proportion of re-offending behaviour is related to theft and related offences (23.4 percent), illicit drug offences (12.9 percent), road traffic and vehicle offences (15.1 percent) and offences against justice procedures (21.2 percent).³

Legal Aid NSW is concerned that a lack of support to assist offenders leaving custody to obtain housing, employment and medical care is contributing to a cycle of reoffending. Anecdotally we have observed this support while transitioning back to the community reduces the likelihood of reoffending.

Continued Incarceration – A Systemic and Recurring Issue

The Productivity Commission found in its Research Paper titled *Australia's prison dilemma*, that “imprisonment for repeat offending can entrench pathways of disadvantage by exacerbating the risk factors that lead to offending. For example, 62 percent of prison discharges had no paid work lined up to start within two weeks of leaving prison. About 36 percent either did not know whether they had a valid Medicare card or did not have one on the first day of release. A similarly large proportion (44 percent) expected to stay in short term or emergency accommodation”⁴ (footnotes omitted).

The effect of this mismatch between integration into society and the removal from the criminal justice system suggests that many prisoners cycle in and out of prison. This follows a ‘churn’ pathway through the criminal justice system. This is likely to be more common among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners.⁵ Consequently, prison sentences, particularly short ones, can disrupt family ties, housing, employment and treatment programs, leading to re-offending behaviour.

Cause and Effect – What Contributes to Re-Offending?

The Productivity Commission has found that “imprisonment may have *criminogenic effects* (that is, increase the chances of reoffending) because of difficulties adjusting to life post-prison, stigma making it difficult for ex-prisoners to find employment or

³ Ibid.

⁴ Productivity Commission, *Australia's Prison Dilemma*, Productivity Commission Research Paper (October 2021) 44-5.

⁵ Ibid Finding 2.6.

housing, weakened links with families and friends, and exposure to other prisoners that may provide an ‘education in crime’ and build networks with criminals”.⁶

Access to a stable housing environment has been shown to have an important role in preventing recidivism, due to its impact on post-release behaviour. Homelessness has been consistently recognised as an important factor in whether an individual first encounters the police.⁷ In Australia, homelessness among people detained in prison is pervasive, with more than half of those to be released expected to go into short-term or emergency accommodation.⁸ Other sources have indicated that more than 50 percent of those leaving custody do not have access to housing.⁹

Throughcare and reintegration efforts have been recognised as an important and cost-effective way to reduce reoffending rates. The Productivity Commission found well designed support and treatment in prison and on release can reduce recidivism; effective treatment of underlying mental illness and alcohol and drug issues improves outcomes; and support for *basic needs such as housing, employment and living skills can prevent offenders returning to crime on release*.¹⁰

The review of a piloted throughcare program in the ACT demonstrated that providing prisoners with housing support, mental health counsel, physical health supports and drug and alcohol rehabilitation for 12 months after release significantly reduced their likelihood of reoffending.¹¹ The cost of this was relatively small in comparison to the cost of imprisonment from reoffending.¹²

Research questions:

This project seeks to conduct research into the effectiveness of both domestic and international programs that provide support to offenders leaving custody.

⁶ Ibid 15 citing Lynne Vieraitis, Tomislav Kovandzic and Thomas Marvell, ‘The Criminogenic Effects of Imprisonment: Evidence from State Panel Data, 1974-2002’ (2007) 6(3) *Criminology & Public Policy* 589.

⁷ Ibid 69.

⁸ Productivity Commission, *Australia’s Prison Dilemma*, Productivity Commission Research Paper (October 2021) 69 citing Eileen Baldry, Desmond McDonnell and Manu Peters, ‘Ex-Prisoners, Homelessness and the State in Australia’ (2006) 39(1) *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology* 20.

⁹ Productivity Commission, *Australia’s Prison Dilemma*, Productivity Commission Research Paper (October 2021) citing Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *The Health of Australia’s Prisoners*, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Canberra

¹⁰ Productivity Commission, *Australia’s Prison Dilemma*, Productivity Commission Research Paper (October 2021).

¹¹ Productivity Commission, *Australia’s Prison Dilemma*, Productivity Commission Research Paper (October 2021).

¹² Productivity Commission, *Australia’s Prison Dilemma*, Productivity Commission Research Paper (October 2021) 47.

On a domestic level please consider NSW, the ACT, South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria.

On an international level please consider New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Norway.

- 1. What throughcare supports are available for offenders leaving custody in the relevant jurisdiction?** In order to understand this it will be necessary to investigate the current Corrective Services and Community Corrections (or equivalent) processes and supports available for offenders leading up to their release, and after leaving custody.
- 2. What are the rates of reoffending in the relevant jurisdiction?**
- 3. What/if any evidence exists to establish that the provision of throughcare supports results in a reduction in reoffending in the relevant jurisdiction?**

The research paper should include:

1. Relevant statistics about reoffending rates of people released from custody, in comparison to a non-custodial sentence.
2. In answering the above, the barriers for support to properly prepare inmates for their release from custody.
3. Relevant academic literature on the issue, in both Australia and internationally, to see if any lessons can be drawn.
4. Options for reform either in the form of a throughcare program to assist offenders to successfully reintegrate into the community after their release from custody, or other initiatives.

Research Parameters

- Recent literature and government documents should be prioritised.
- **NB:** researchers should outline their search strategy, reasons for inclusion/exclusion of sources, and any possible limitations of included sources. It is strongly encouraged to take advantage of the University's [library services](#) to develop a robust research method. Please take care to ensure all information sources are referenced accurately and completely, according to the [Harvard Referencing Style](#).

Preliminary Resources

- Legislation
 - *Crimes Act 1900* (NSW)
 - *Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999* (NSW)
- Other Material
 - [Recidivism Rates by Country 2024 \(worldpopulationreview.com\)](https://worldpopulationreview.com)
 - Productivity Commission, *Australia's Prison Dilemma*, Productivity Commission Research Paper (October 2021).
 - Lynne Vieraitis, Tomislav Kovandzic and Thomas Marvell, 'The Criminogenic Effects of Imprisonment: Evidence from State Panel Data, 1974-2002' (2007) 6(3) *Criminology & Public Policy* 589.
 - NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, *Reoffending Statistics for NSW* (online, 22 May 2024) <[Re-offending \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://nsw.gov.au)>.
 - Joanna JJ Wang and Suzanne Poynton, [*Intensive Correction Orders Versus Short Prison Sentence: A Comparison of Re-Offending*](#) (NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, Contemporary Issues in Crime and Justice No 207, October 2017)
 - Eileen Baldry, 'Throughcare: Making the policy a reality', presented at Reintegration Puzzle Conference, Sydney (2007).
 - Andrew Griffiths, Alisa Wicks, Fredrick Zmudzki and Shona Bates, *Evaluation of Extended Throughcare Pilot Program: Evaluation Plan* (Research Paper, Social Policy Research Centre, March 2016).
 - Centre for Policy Development 2020, *Partners in Crime: The Relationship Between Disadvantage and Australia's Criminal Justice Systems*, Sydney.
 - Caroline Doyle, Sophie Yates, Lorana Bartels, Anthony Hopkins and Helen Taylor "People say you're going home, but I don't have a home': Housing After Prison" (2022) *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 1.
 - Matthew Willis, *Supported housing for prisoners returning to the community: A review of the literature* (Australian Institute of Criminology, Research Report 7, 2018).

- Joseph Graffam, Alison Shinkfield and Barbara Lavelle, 'Recidivism Among Participants of an Employment Assistance Program for Prisoners and Offenders' (2014) 58(3) *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 348.
- David Kirk, Geoffrey Barnes, Jordan Hyatt and Brook Kearley, 'The impact of residential change and housing stability on recidivism: pilot results from the Maryland Opportunities through Vouchers Experiment (MOVE)' (2018) 14 *Journal of Experimental Criminology* 213.
- Leah Jacobs and Aaron Gottlieb, 'The Effect of Housing Circumstances on Recidivism: Evidence From a Sample of People on Probation in San Francisco' (2020) 47(9) *Criminal Justice and Behaviour* 1097.

Executive Summary

Reducing recidivism in NSW is crucial to reducing the burden on the criminal justice system and promoting the reintegration of ex-offenders into society, allowing them to find work, maintain family connections and regain a sense of purpose and identity. Recidivism, or repeated reoffending, is high in Australia, and there is much that can be done to reduce these rates.

This research identifies key drivers of recidivism, including lack of post-release support, unemployment, mental health and substance abuse issues, and systemic disadvantages, particularly for Indigenous communities. Throughcare programs, comprehensive support services that facilitate reintegration into the community, are highlighted as a critical strategy for addressing these challenges and potentially contributing to reduced recidivism rates. Such programs typically offer assistance with housing, employment, health services, and social support, aiming to mitigate the “collateral consequences” of imprisonment, such as homelessness and social exclusion. This paper comparatively reviews throughcare programs offered in various Australian and international jurisdictions and assesses the outcomes of these approaches based on the limited literature available.

This research brief also puts forward several recommendations for NSW on how the state’s throughcare programs can be improved, based on best practice findings from other jurisdictions.

Introduction

This research will explain throughcare programs run in various local and international jurisdictions that can be enhanced and adapted to develop a more efficient recidivism program in New South Wales (NSW), Australia. Several academic studies explore the causes of recidivism in Australia, highlighting systemic, social, and individual factors. Some key causes of recidivism include limited post-release supports, unemployment and economic hardship faced on release, mental health issues, substance abuse, systemic disadvantage, and weak rehabilitation programs.

Recidivism in Australia represents a multifaceted issue shaped by social, economic, and systemic factors. Extensive academic research consistently underscores the importance of enhancing rehabilitation programs, providing robust employment support, and addressing mental health needs as critical components in reducing reoffending rates. These findings suggest that a more comprehensive, integrated approach to the criminal justice system is necessary to effectively address the underlying determinants of recidivism and promote the long-term reintegration of individuals into society.

Recidivism rates

The Australian Institute of Criminology (2007) defines recidivism as repetitive criminal activity, a term synonymous with repeat offending or reoffending. Reoffending is committing a crime following previous criminal activity (Drabsch, 2006), and a recidivist offender is a convicted criminal who goes on to commit additional offences (AIC, 2007).

The rates of reoffending vary across the examined jurisdictions. In Australia, around 60% of prisoners have previously been incarcerated (ABS, 2024). In NSW, the percentage of adults found guilty in court who reoffend in the following 12 months has increased from 20.9% in 2019 to 23.4% in 2022 (BOCSAR, 2025). The percentage of young people (under 18) found guilty in court in 2022 who reoffended in the following 12 months was higher than the percentage for adults at 44.6% (BOCSAR 2025). Aboriginal people found guilty in court in 2022 had high rates of reoffending in the following 12 months; for Aboriginal adults it was 42.7%, and for young people it was

56.8%. The annual average reoffending rate for adults within 12 months is 28.1% (in the 12 months before March 2021) (BOSCAR, 2025).

In the ACT, 63% of offenders return to prison in the two year period following their release (Doyle et al., 2022). In Tasmania, 47.1% of offenders returned to prison within two years in 2020 and this figure increased to 50.4% in 2021. In South Australia, the 2023–24 Report on Government Services (ROGS, 2023) highlights a decline in the state's recidivism rate, which dropped to 35.8%. In Victoria, 39.5% of prisoners released during 2020–21 returned to prison within two years (to 2022–23).

Internationally, we studied the throughcare systems of New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Norway so as to determine best practices that could be adopted into the Australian throughcare offerings. In the United Kingdom from January to March 2022, the reoffending rate was 25.5%. Juvenile offenders had a proven reoffending rate of 34.2% (MoJ, 2024). In Norway, the prison model focuses on rehabilitation and results in some of the lowest recidivism rates in the world (World Prison Brief, n.d). Prisoners who recommit an offence within 2 years have decreased from 55% to 49% from 2002 to 2008. It has stabilised at 47% for those released in 2017 (SMF, 2025). In New Zealand, 170 people are imprisoned per 100,000, in comparison to New South Wales, which has 208 prisoners per 100,000 adult population (ABS, 2024). In New Zealand, the reoffending rate is 56.5% following release from prison. Around 35% of offenders are re-imprisoned after 2 years following release from prison (MoJ, n.d.).

Throughcare

In 2001, a British study into the resettlement of ex-offenders into the community perfectly summed up the need for throughcare when stating:

“Unless something is done to tackle the causes of offending behaviour, and the social and economic exclusion from which it commonly springs, and to which it contributes, prisons will continue to have revolving doors” (HMIP, 2001, p.4).

Throughcare, sometimes termed ‘reintegration’, ‘resettlement’ or ‘re-entry’, are support services and programs put in place to facilitate offenders’ reintegration into the community (Hart, Gelb & Martinovic, 2023). Throughcare aims to address the challenges of life after prison that increase the risk of recidivism. Recently released

prisoners are at higher risk of homelessness, substance abuse and poor mental health than the general population (Morony et al, 2019). The “collateral consequences” of imprisonment, including social exclusion and economic disadvantage, can become criminogenic factors, meaning factors that contribute to an individual’s likelihood of engaging in criminal activity (Morony et al, 2019). Unstable or no accommodation, unemployment, limited access to health and other services, alongside limited capacity for social integration, parole conditions and frequent appointments cause stress, fatigue and negative self-esteem, which can catalyse recidivism (Hart, Gelb & Martinovic, 2023).

Most throughcare programs offer multimodal supports that address particular criminogenic risk factors by building up ex-prisoners social capital, for instance, through housing provision, employment and social support, alleviating drug and alcohol dependency, and facilitating transport (Berghuis, 2018). Throughcare programs are typically opt-in or voluntary, and thus a key feature tends to be involving ex-offenders in accessing programmes and developing support plans aimed at meeting their specific needs (Malloch et al, 2013). Throughcare programs generally feature intensive contact and support provision in the period immediately following release, particularly pertaining to income and housing support and family contact, while longer-term support can focus on training and employment (Malloch et al, 2013). Every Australian jurisdiction has formalised throughcare policies, however, there is limited information on how throughcare is operated or how successful the programs are deemed. Furthermore, there is little formal evidence on the effectiveness of throughcare, nor is there a consensus on optimum throughcare program design or success factors for reintegration (Morony, 2019).

This paper will conduct a comparative analysis of academic literature sourced from Google Scholar and the USYD Library using the key search terms “throughcare”, “prison throughcare”, “recidivism” and “reoffending” to evaluate the effectiveness of domestic and international programs that support offenders transitioning from custody. Domestically, the analysis will focus on programs in New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, South Australia, Tasmania, and Victoria. Internationally, it will examine programs in New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Norway. This analysis acknowledges its limitations, including variations in social contexts such as historical

systems and cultural diversity across jurisdictions. As a result, effective elements from other regions may not always be transferable to practices in New South Wales. Additionally, the dearth of end-to-end analyses of current throughcare programs in each jurisdiction and inconsistencies between jurisdictions on how recidivism is measured limit the breadth and depth of this paper.

Analysis of Throughcare Programs in Various Jurisdictions

Domestic jurisdictions

New South Wales

In New South Wales (NSW), all throughcare programs are free and voluntary. In most cases, just prior to release or in the weeks following, offenders can apply to participate.

The Community Restorative Centre (CRC) is the lead provider in throughcare programs in NSW. CRC receives funding from both state and federal grants to provide a wide range of services and programs for ex-offenders that aim to reduce crime and break entrenched cycles of disadvantage, offending and imprisonment (CRC, n.d.). Their Transitional and Post-Release Services support people who risk homelessness upon release by connecting people to the Housing NSW Temporary Accommodation service and other private accommodation options. The Reintegration Housing Support Program more holistically connects ex-offenders at risk of homelessness with specialist support workers who help them with parole and probation obligations, Centrelink, substance abuse support, physical and mental health services, obtaining emergency items such as clothing, mobile phones and transportation, as well as help with connecting to friends, family and the community. CRC also has programs tailored to support young people aged 10-24 caught in the criminal justice system, ex-offenders with drug and alcohol problems, and Indigenous offenders.

Another privately operated throughcare provider is MTC Australia. The MTC program assigns each participant a Throughcare Coordinator before release who works with them to develop a tailored release plan that connects them with community organizations and support services. MTC Throughcare typically assists with finding accommodation, housing and employment, family support, drug and alcohol support, education and training, counselling and mentoring (MTC, n.d.).

There are currently no publicly available assessments of the efficacy of the CRC or MTC throughcare programs at reducing recidivism among participants.

Other throughcare providers in NSW are tailored to address specific risk factors, rather than providing holistic post-release support. For example, Connections is a voluntary throughcare program providing social services and free opioid agonist treatment for ex-offenders with opioid use exiting prisons (Sullivan et al, 2024). Connections is one of the only throughcare programs in NSW whose efficacy has been studied. The 2024 review of the program by Sullivan et al found that ex-offenders who participated in the program had lower mortality within twenty-eight days of release from prison, but did not reduce the likelihood of reoffending and returning to custody. In fact, the review found that female and Indigenous participants in Connections had a higher risk of return-to-custody than the study's control group of ex-offenders, although the cause of the correlation is unclear.

The government-run Post-Custodial Support (PCS) Program provides ex-offenders with substance abuse issues with integrated case management, accessing employment or Centrelink, accessing mental and physical health services and making community connections (NSW Health, n.d.). Again, there are currently no publicly accessible reviews of the efficacy of this program.

As most post-custody throughcare supports in NSW are outsourced to non-governmental organisations, and these organisations are often ill-funded, there has been very limited review of program efficacy for reducing recidivism. As previously stated, the most recent (2022) data on recidivism in NSW is 28.1% of adults reoffend within twelve months of leaving custody, which has increased from 20.9% in 2019 (BOSCAR 2025). Existing NSW throughcare programs are either not resourced enough to successfully support ex-offenders to reintegrate into the community or there are as-yet unstudied flaws in the program designs that contribute to their failure at reducing recidivism rates.

Australian Capital Territory

The main throughcare provider in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) is ACT Corrective Services, which runs the Extended Throughcare Program. Having commenced in 2013, the program was designed to align with the territory's "person-centred approach" to the criminal justice system, whereby throughcare is tailored to the needs and circumstances of each individual (Malloch, 2013). The Extended

Throughcare Program commences pre-release and continues for twelve months post-release, offering support across healthcare, income, basic needs and accommodation (Doyle et al, 2022). This program has received mixed feedback from participants, with some saying there was a lack of engagement from employment services, insufficient stable housing offered and that there were significant delays in being able to access support services. In contrast, others cited the program as having a positive impact on their self-esteem and confidence (Doyle et al, 2022) and that the material support offered by the program was an important factor in reducing the possibility that they would reoffend (Griffiths et al, 2017). In 2017, the University of New South Wales released an evaluation of the Extended Throughcare Program, and, despite significant limitations in available datasets for control and study groups, found that participation in the program slightly reduces recidivism (Griffiths et al, 2017).

The only adult prison in the ACT, the Alexander Maconochie Centre, offers the Reintegration Program. This program offers services including housing, healthcare, income, family and community connections, contacting services and day-of-release support through a needs-based assessment of prisoners for up to a year post-release (ACT Government, n.d.).

Throughcare is also offered by community organisations in the ACT. Prisoners Aid ACT does not have a designated throughcare program, however, it offers throughcare support such as assisting with transport and financial aid by providing food bank cards, OzHarvest food hampers, bus tickets and essential cards for groceries and clothing. They also offer occasional emergency accommodation and assist ex-offenders in obtaining documents such as driver's licences and birth certificates (Prisoners Aid, n.d.). CatholicCare runs the short-term (2-4 week) ThroughCare Outreach Program, which provides similar practical assistance. Toora Women Inc. offers housing support, counselling and addiction assistance to women released from prisons. There are no publicly accessible evaluations of these throughcare programs.

The ACT has the highest rates of prior imprisonment in Australia despite having a centralised throughcare program since 2013, indicating that the throughcare supports offered in the territory have not been sufficient to reduce reoffending (Carnell, 2023). The minor success of the Extended Throughcare Program indicates that a “person-centred” approach to throughcare may be a key factor in reducing recidivism, however,

more research into how this program differs from others offered in the ACT is necessary.

Victoria

The Victorian Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (VACRO) is a leading provider of throughcare services in Victoria, supporting people as they transition from prison back into the community. (*How we help - returning to community* n.d.). They offer both practical and emotional support to help individuals rebuild their lives after incarceration. Their throughcare approach ensures that people receive the right support at every critical stage of their journey through the criminal justice system. Participation in this program is completely voluntary, empowering individuals to choose the support that best suits their needs. The program's eligibility is assessed based on offenders' risk levels and their specific needs. ReConnect offers targeted, intensive post-release reintegration support for up to 12 months to prisoners identified as having high transitional needs, as well as other eligible priority groups (*How we help - returning to community* n.d.).

One of the evaluations of the throughcare program in Victoria is the Bridging the Gap program (Griffiths et al. 2016). It provided intensive, coordinated support to offenders with drug or alcohol issues through community-based agencies (Griffiths et al. 2016). It included pre-release planning and post-release assistance focused on employment, housing, treatment, and health (Griffiths et al. 2016). The program led to improved outcomes in drug dependence, treatment engagement, housing stability, and reduced reoffending within the first 120 days after release (Griffiths et al. 2016).

Recently, the Arc Social Impact Bond was launched in Victoria with the aim of breaking the cycle of reoffending and homelessness (Social Ventures 2024). This throughcare program offers a minimum of three months of pre-release planning and rapport-building, followed by two years of intensive, innovative case management and, importantly, access to stable housing (Social Ventures 2024). Drawing on both local and international evidence, the program is designed to reduce participants' reliance on justice, health, and homelessness services, ultimately generating cost savings for the Victorian Government (Social Ventures 2024). The program commenced in May 2024, with the first Arc SIB Annual Report due to investors in June 2026 (Social

Ventures 2024). Early lived examples shared on the program's website highlight the value of sustained, supportive relationships, with case managers walking alongside clients through challenges, helping to build resilience and motivation for long-term life change (Social Ventures 2024).

Tasmania

The Salvation Army-run Beyond the Wire program in Tasmania, which receives money from the Department of Justice, has shown notable effectiveness in lowering participant recidivism rates. In contrast to the 47.1% of Tasmanian inmates who reoffend within two years over the same time period, only 10% of ex-offenders reoffended and returned to jail, according to a 2020 evaluation of the program (The Salvation Army 2023).

A key factor in reducing reoffending within this program is providing access to stable and sustainable housing, helping to break the vicious cycle of homelessness, imprisonment, and recidivism (The Salvation Army 2023). An article also highlights the importance of stable and sustainable housing, the Reintegration for Ex-Offenders Program, which focuses on providing stable housing for individuals leaving prison (Birgerson & Dwyer 2022). The program's ability to lower recidivism rates was successful. 52 individuals got help between July 2011 and March 2013, and just one of them reoffended and went back to jail. (Birgerson & Dwyer 2022). The provision of secure housing in conjunction with a case plan that was specifically designed for each client and covered important requirements including budgeting, education, job, recreation, training, and other useful assistance was primarily responsible for this achievement (Birgerson & Dwyer 2022).

Another key factor identified in the study of the Beyond the Wire program is the importance of avoiding re-traumatisation, which can result from physical restraint, abuse of authority, and inadequate rehabilitation efforts (Devos & Nagy 2022). To address this, the program incorporates a trauma-informed approach within its throughcare model. Only those serving sentences longer than six months are eligible for the program, which is one of its drawbacks. The problem with this is that women's sentences are usually only a few months long, whereas men's sentences are usually one year (Devos & Nagy 2022). This discrepancy implies that trauma-informed and

gender-responsive throughcare are both necessary for its actual efficacy (Devos & Nagy 2022). Women run the danger of being left out of crucial reintegration assistance if these factors are ignored.

South Australia

The government of South Australia funds the Rehabilitation Programs Branch under its Department of Correctional Services to reduce reoffending through targeted programs. These programs are designed based on the type of offence committed and the offender's assessed risk level (Rehabilitation Programs Branch 2020). There are four main groups of offenders: those who have committed violent offences, sexual offences, domestic violence offences, and general offences. Each program varies in length and intensity, depending on the individual's likelihood of reoffending. By tailoring rehabilitation efforts, the SA government aims to reduce recidivism and support safer communities through effective offender rehabilitation and reintegration (Rehabilitation Programs Branch 2020).

Differentiating between risk levels and sorts of crimes committed could be effective. Violent recidivism among participants deemed to be at "moderate" and "high" risk is decreased by the South Australian Violence Prevention Program, according to this examination of reoffending outcomes for those released between 2014 and 2016 (Mercer et al. 2021).

International Jurisdictions

New Zealand

New Zealand has a variety of throughcare systems in place. They include problem solving courts, judicial supervision, mandated community supervision and parole.

A problem solving court focuses on addressing the underlying causes of reoffending by shifting their approach to a 'systemic response to social issues', a 'collaborative approach between the parties, the use of non-traditional roles that deemphasise the adversarial nature of the court process' (Trood et al. 2022). Problem solving courts are termed Personal Individual Needs Court (PINC), such as the one in Masterton, New Zealand which focuses on low-level offenders who come through 'the revolving

door of the courts' (DOC 2023). These offenders often have multiple issues that can be dealt with at their root cause to prevent further recidivism. The PINC works with a community organisation to arrange assistance for example giving the person benefits if they are jobless or homeless and assisting with finding housing. Other strategies may include counselling for alcohol and drug problems which are often at the root cause of the crimes committed by low-level reoffenders.

Judicial supervision is the "review and monitoring of an offender's compliance with a treatment programme or court order at designated 'status review hearings' conducted by a judicial officer" (Trood et al. 2022). In short, it provides an offender with the chance to confront the root causes of their offending behaviours in order to motivate action towards positive changes. Offenders in this programme must follow certain conditions such as paying a fine, paying reparation to their victim/s, doing community work and being under electronically-monitored curfews through a community detention sentence. The offender has special conditions imposed under supervision and must report to a probation officer who explains the requirements and conditions of the sentence (DOC n.d.).

If the re offender breaches these conditions sanctions such as a preliminary warning, increase in reporting requirements, further conviction (community work or imprisonment) or a more restrictive sentence will be applied.

Mandated community supervision is widely used to assist the management and rehabilitation of individuals not only in New Zealand but also in Australia, Canada, the UK and the US (Lloyd et al. 2020). This includes activities such as parole. Parole allows an offender to finish serving their sentence in the community whilst reintegrating them into society. Ultimately, once their sentence is completed they may have found or be close to finding accommodation and/or employment.

A meta-analytical study was conducted in Australia and New Zealand to assess the effectiveness of problem solving courts compared to traditional judicial practices. The study assessed a treatment sample of 65888 individuals and 32,147 comparison participants from Australia and New Zealand. The study identified that problem solving courts have been successful in achieving the common aim of reducing recidivism (Trood et al. 2022, p. 652). There is some evidence that they are cost-effective, if not

cheaper, than the alternative of imprisonment. Over a period of 15.0 - 19.5 months, participation in Australian and New Zealand problem-solving courts translated to approximately 1 in 10 fewer recidivists and those who did reoffend committed 20% fewer offences than non-exposed individuals (Trood et al. 2022, p. 670). The overall results suggest that judicial supervision interventions in both Australia and New Zealand are linked to reductions in frequency and likelihood of reoffending compared to standard judicial practices (Trood et al. 2022, p. 670). Further, connections between reduction in recidivism in intervention participants compared with regular treatment individuals are found in drug courts, mental health courts and domestic violence courts (Trood et al. 2022, p. 652).

However, the results from independent studies are at risk of significant bias due to treatment and comparison participants not being adequately matched. Thus, the study concludes that problem solving courts that incorporate judicial supervision in Australia and New Zealand are tentatively proving more effective at reducing recidivism rates than traditional justice processes but should be considered cautiously due to the likelihood of methodological bias.

Norway

Norwegian communities prioritize rehabilitation over punishment for incarcerated individuals. Government expenditure on each prisoner reaches approximately \$93,000 annually (First Step Alliance, 2022). A key component of this approach is *Gjennomføringsgaranti*, or Norway's Reintegration Guarantee, which provides essential throughcare support. This program ensures that individuals have access to housing, healthcare, employment, education, and social services post-release, which are essential when starting a new life. Additionally, the program fosters collaboration between the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV), local government agencies, and correctional facilities to prevent social exclusion (Bakken, 2021).

Norway's throughcare program has been shown to significantly reduce recidivism, as evidenced by academic research. The country boasts one of the lowest recidivism rates globally, with a five-year reconviction rate of around 20%. This stands in stark contrast to countries with more punitive systems, such as the United States (60–70%) and the United Kingdom (50%) (Kristoffersen, 2014).

Studies indicate that stable housing, employment, and education are pivotal in reducing the likelihood of reoffending. Offenders who secure employment post-release exhibit a significantly lower risk of recidivism compared to those who remain unemployed (Skardhamar & Telle, 2012; Graunbøl et al., 2010).

Norway's throughcare system, which integrates housing, employment, education, and supervised release, has proven effective in reducing recidivism. The research underscores Norway's position as one of the leading countries in offender rehabilitation, thanks to its comprehensive reintegration policies that markedly reduce the rates of reoffending.

The Norwegian system plays a critical role in breaking the cycle of criminal behaviour by providing offenders with opportunities to acquire new skills, thereby increasing their employability after serving their sentence (Akkoyun & Akkoyun, 2024). This approach suggests that societal treatment and support for offenders are instrumental in facilitating their successful reintegration into society.

However, the Australian rehabilitation approach, which is a mixture of punitive and rehabilitation with a basis of correctional justice (Heseltine & Day, 2017), is different from the Norwegian approach of restorative and humane treatment of prisoners (Todd-Kvam, 2022).

The United Kingdom

The United Kingdom has invested in various programs for the rehabilitation of offenders.

Prior to release, prisoners undergo assessments to identify their needs regarding housing, employment, education, and mental health. These assessments facilitate the development of a structured reintegration plan, which is critical for reducing the likelihood of post-release failure (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002).

Probation officers play a pivotal role in supporting offenders after release, ensuring compliance with curfews and participation in rehabilitation programs. Research by Hucklesby (2016) indicates that probation supervision reduces reoffending by providing continuity of support. Similarly, a study by the Ministry of Justice (2014)

found that ongoing probation supervision helps address post-release challenges, thereby reducing recidivism risk.

Stable housing is a fundamental element of successful reintegration into society. According to the Ministry of Justice (2012), access to stable accommodation is associated with lower reoffending rates. For instance, the *Through the Gate* housing initiative provides critical accommodation support as part of a comprehensive throughcare model (Hucklesby, 2016).

Employment opportunities are central to reducing recidivism. Shapland et al. (2007) assert that offering vocational training and employment prospects significantly mitigates the risk of reoffending. The Prison Employment and Training Service (PETS) is one such program that equips offenders with skills to re-enter the workforce (Sampson & Laub, 1993).

Integrated support for substance misuse and mental health issues is an essential component of throughcare services. Seddon (2006) highlights that untreated substance misuse and mental health conditions are strongly linked to higher reoffending rates. The National Offender Management Service's (2009) evaluation of mental health programs within prisons found positive correlations between mental health support and reduced reoffending.

The reintegration process is significantly influenced by offenders' connections to family and community networks. Research by Shapland et al. (2007) demonstrates that offenders with strong family ties are less likely to reoffend, underlining the critical role of social support in successful reintegration.

Mentoring and peer support programs have been found to effectively reduce recidivism. Barnett and Lee (2015) report that offenders who participated in mentorship or peer support initiatives exhibited higher levels of motivation to change, contributing to more successful reintegration outcomes.

Key Recommendations

Our recommendations are grounded in evidence-based approaches that have reduced recidivism rates in various jurisdictions and can be adopted into the NSW recidivism program. These recommendations can crucially improve the high rate of recidivism we see in NSW.

1. A comprehensive list of all throughcare programs and service providers should be compiled and made publicly available to all prisoners in NSW. This will ease stress on ex-offenders and their families by making it easier to identify and access available throughcare resources. Parole or corrections officers should also encourage ex-offenders to access these pre-release programs and check in periodically (every 3-4 months) to ensure the individual is taking full advantage of the programs in place.
2. Throughcare programs that offer holistic, individualised support that help ameliorate entrenched disadvantages and alleviate criminogenic factors are successful at reducing recidivism. Instead of having to access different support services from various service providers individually, each throughcare program should direct ex-offenders to all necessary support services through a case worker or service coordinator who is assigned to them for the duration of the program.
3. Thorough analyses of the efficacy of existing throughcare programs and rigorous data on program participant reoffending rates are necessary to properly determine the most effective throughcare program designs for reducing recidivism. This will require funding academic evaluations into the programs, as well as adequate funding for throughcare providers to conduct their own reviews and data collection methods.
4. Sustainable and empowering physiological and social support shows positive long-term impacts not just on individuals but also on their families. Thus, a successful throughcare program has components of intervention significant not just for the offender but also for the entire family, such as stable housing.

5. Social support is essential for the reintegration of individuals into the community and to eliminate the possibility of re-committing criminal acts. A reintegration program with regular monitoring and support from communities may be ideal for the individuals to feel accepted and welcomed in society. This will hugely influence them in the reintegration to post-prison life.

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