



How many specialist beds exist for people leaving prison in NSW?

Introduction

People who have been incarcerated face higher rates of homelessness and can experience exclusion from homelessness services due to their time in prison. Despite this, there is a lack of funded beds in the service sector for people exiting prison.

Homelessness and housing instability are significant drivers of incarceration, with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) reporting that **people entering prison were around 100 times more likely to be homeless than people in the general community** (AIHW 2023, p. 80). Homelessness also poses a significant barrier to effectively transitioning back into the community for system-involved people, with almost half (48%) of people exiting prison expecting to be homeless (including in short-term and emergency accommodation) (AIHW 2023, p. 81). Such findings are supported by research showing that experiencing cycles of incarceration is significantly associated with, and is predicted by, homelessness and housing instability (Baldry et al. 2006; Martin et al. 2021).

In 2014, the NSW Going Home Staying Home reforms identified people leaving institutional settings as being a priority group, thus highlighting the need for mainstream homelessness services to better support people leaving prison. However, research conducted by Community Restorative Centre (CRC) for a submission to an inquiry into homelessness, highlighted the inability of the service sector to meet the needs of the growing prison population due to the absence of specialist homelessness funding for people leaving prison (Sotiri 2020, p. 6). This research piece aims to update findings from that submission, to determine whether the number and types of beds have changed for people exiting prison. This project echoes the call for increased specialist homelessness funding to disrupt entrenched cycles of homelessness and incarceration. Information on

service providers and their capacity in this resource offers vital data for service provision and advocacy work for communities at the intersection of criminal legal system¹ involvement and housing instability.

Method

The groundwork of the findings was drawn from CRC's '2020 Submission to Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry into Homelessness', which gave an overview of services available for people facing homelessness upon exiting prison (Sotiri 2020). Additionally, we drew on information provided by the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) on the funding of Transitional Supported Accommodation (DCJ 2023). Additional information about who the service providers are, what they provide, and their criteria for inclusion was acquired through organisational websites, annual reports and checking data with services. From this research, we developed a list of services and the allocated number of funded beds they provide for people exiting prison.

An inconsistency was found within the 2023 Annual Report from Glebe House, which stated that 'Glebe House is allocated funding to maintain a capacity of 12 beds for Transitional Supported Accommodation (TSA) throughout the year' (Glebe House 2023, p. 13). However, the information from DCJ, last updated in 2023, indicates that this number is much lower, reporting only 3 beds being allocated. Contacting Glebe House allowed for this inconsistency to be addressed, which revealed that the information provided by the DCJ was current and accurate.

Beyond these findings, online searches revealed limited information on any additional service providers that allocate specialist beds for people exiting prison, with only one service provider being self-funded. Service providers that were mentioned in the Submission as previously allocating beds for people exiting prison, such as hostels, were included despite not currently specifying via publicly accessible information whether this is still the case, to inform future research and updates to this list. Hope Hostel were contacted to confirm this information and stated that they do not allocate beds for this cohort.

¹ We use the term 'criminal legal system', as opposed to 'criminal justice system', to reflect how the 'justice system' has been imposed on First Nations communities without their consent, and regularly fails to deliver 'just' outcomes.

This research project was undertaken and compiled by a university student intern with CRC, Jorja Thompson.

Service providers

Service providers with known capacity				
Service Provider	What they do	Funding	Criteria	Beds
Glebe House	Glebe House is a therapeutic community and rehabilitation center that helps men transition to a life free from addiction. The program includes a 12-week residential component, followed by open-ended, ongoing aftercare as a member of their Outreach community.	TSA	<p>Male</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires all clients have not used substances for the past 30 days, and that all admissions provide a negative urine drug screen before admission. <p>Exclusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charges of a sexual nature Clients on pharmacotherapy, such as methadone, buprenorphine etc. Clients who have had mental health episodes in prior 6 months are not accepted without a comprehensive mental health assessment from treating physician, with 	3

			documentation of diagnosis and treatment options.	
Guthrie House	Guthrie House is a not-for-profit transitional accommodation service for women with an involvement in the criminal legal system. Guthrie offers a range of wrap-around support services.	TSA	<p>Women, over 18</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must have a history or current experience of drug and alcohol dependence. • Must be homeless or at risk of homelessness • Must first complete detoxification at a recognised detoxification unit. • Clients on opiate treatment programs accepted. <p>Exclusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Males, women with children over 12 months of age in their care, women prescribed benzodiazepines or opioids, women with an untreated mental health diagnosis. 	5
Rainbow Lodge	Rainbow Lodge is a residential support program for men to transition back into the community following a period	TSA	<p>Male, over 18</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium-high or high level of Service Inventory – Revised (LSI-R) 	8

	of incarceration, with a focus on healing from trauma. It involves intensive case management as well as group education.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At risk of homelessness <p>Exclusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No child-related offences 	
Adele House	Adele House provides residential rehabilitation for men who have a dependence on alcohol and other drugs. It offers individualised treatment based on a comprehensive assessment, case management, therapeutic group program, and aftercare support.	TSA	<p>Male, over 18</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drug or alcohol dependency 	4
Namatjira Haven	Namatjira Haven is an independent Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation that plays a leading role in empowering Aboriginal people through culturally appropriate programs. The service aims to address problematic	TSA	<p>Aboriginal male, over 18</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have a current drug and alcohol dependency; Have no requirement to attend court during your residency <p>Exclusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sexual offences Violent offences 	2

	substance use and related issues.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are on an opiate treatment program • Are on anti-psychotic medications or opiate medications 	
Samaritans Wyong	Samaritans offer assistance with alcohol and other drug (AOD) dependence and direct AOD counselling.	TSA	Male <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clients on opiate treatment programs accepted 	2
Samaritans Adamstown (Newcastle)	Samaritans offer assistance with AOD dependence and direct AOD counselling.	TSA	Male <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clients on opiate treatment programs accepted 	4
Samaritans Maryville (Newcastle)	Samaritans offer assistance with AOD dependence and direct AOD counselling.	TSA	Male <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clients on opiate treatment programs accepted 	2
Friendship House (Samaritans)	Friendship House is a support program for men exiting prison and provides accommodation for up to 28 days.	Self-funded (donations)	Male	2
Women and Girls Emergency Centre (WAGEC)	Organisation supporting safer futures for women and children by ending gender-based violence.	Judith Nielson Foundation	Adults who access the beds must be women and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have had contact with the legal system • either be pregnant, have children in their care or in out-of-home care. 	6 adults, 9 children

Service providers with no known capacity				
Matthew Talbot Hostel	Matthew Talbot Centre is a homeless service that provides case management and specialised support to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Crisis accommodation is offered for up to three months depending on the individual's circumstances.	Donations	Male, over 18	NO allocated beds.
Hope Hostel	Hope Hostel is a crisis accommodation service for single men who are experiencing homelessness.	Unclear	Male, over 18 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At risk of, or experiencing, homelessness. 	NO allocated beds.
Foster House	Foster House provides short, safe and secure crisis accommodation for adult men.	Unclear	Male, over 18 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prison or hospital referral - requires letter. 	NO allocated beds.
John Purcell House	John Purcell House provides a short-term crisis accommodation service for men who are experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness. They offer a range of services, such as housing support, case	Donations	Male, over 21	NO allocated beds.

	management and living skills development.			
--	---	--	--	--

Findings and discussion

DCJ’s Funded Partnership Initiative (FPI) funded Transitional Supported Accommodation (TSA) for up to 12 weeks at 8 service providers, supplying **30** specialist beds in total. Friendship House, a self-funded program of the Samaritans Foundation has a **2**-bedroom house to accommodate two male clients post-release for up to 28 days. WAGEC provides **6** beds for adults (women), funded by the Judith Neilson Foundation.

Overall, we found 38 allocated beds for adults exiting prison, with 11 specifically for women and 27 for men. No funded beds were reported for non-binary² adults.

The CRC 2020 parliamentary submission on homelessness, where the bed count was last undertaken, also showed 38 specialist-funded beds for people exiting prison in NSW (Sotiri 2020, p. 21), meaning the figure has not changed between 2020 and 2024.

Gendered differences in funded beds corroborate the findings of Baldry and colleagues (2006), which found that women have greater problems securing suitable accommodation than their male peers. An emerging issue these findings highlight is the severe lack of crisis accommodation available for gender diverse people³ exiting prison, who are overrepresented when it comes to homelessness and incarceration (Fraser et al. 2019). While homelessness services for gender diverse people do exist, such as the [Specialist Transgender Homelessness Service](#) by the Gender Centre, they do not receive funding from DCJ to reserve beds for people exiting prison.

² Non-binary individuals are people who are not exclusively men or women.

³ The term ‘gender diverse’ encompasses people whose gender differs to what was presumed for them at birth.

Additionally, Namatjira Haven offers a crucial space for Aboriginal men exiting prison that is culturally safe, however, the limited funding- for 2 beds- is inconsistent with the well-documented overrepresentation of First Nations people in prison. The lack of funding for specialist accommodation for Aboriginal women is concerning, given Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have at points been the fastest-growing prison population (Bartels 2012; Ooi 2018; Pisani, Sinclair and Rahman 2022, p. 2). While some services make First Nations people a priority, more culturally safe services must receive government funding to adequately address and challenge the overrepresentation of First Nations people in prison.

In conclusion, despite the growing rates of imprisonment, homelessness- as a driver of incarceration- remains inadequately addressed. This project highlighted the ongoing limitations in specialist service sector funding that hinder the capacity of the community sector to support people transitioning from prison to the community – given there are only **38** known beds funded across NSW for this adult client group.

A note

While every effort has been made to include accurate data in this research, it would be appreciated if readers could inform the CRC advocacy and research team if any services have inadvertently been left out of this resource, or if there are updates on their service provision: arpu.team@crcnsw.org.au

References

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2023, *Prisoners in Australia*, ABS, viewed 14 November 2024, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/prisoners-australia/latest-release>

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2023, *The health of people in Australia's prisons 2022*, viewed 14 November 2024, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/prisoners/the-health-of-people-in-australias-prisons-2022>

Baldry, E, McDonnell, D, Maplestone, P, & Peeters, M 2006, 'Ex-prisoners, homelessness and the state in Australia', *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, vol. 39, no. 1, pp. 20-33.

Bartels, L 2012, 'Painting the picture of Indigenous women in custody in Australia', *QUT Law & Justice Journal*, vol.12. no. 2, pp. 1-17.

Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) 2023, *Funded Partnership Initiative: Transitional Supported Accommodation*, DCJ, viewed 20 September 2024, <https://correctiveservices.dcj.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/dcj/corrective-services-nsw/fpi/transitional-supported-accommodation-fact-sheet.pdf>

Fraser, B, Pierse, N, Chisholm, E, & Cook, H 2019, 'LGBTIQ+ Homelessness: A Review of the Literature', *International journal of environmental research and public health*, vol. 16, no. 15, p. 2677.

Glebe House 2023, *Annual Report 2023*, viewed 20 September 2024, <https://glebehouse.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Glebe-House-Annual-Report-2023.pdf>

Martin, C, Reeve, R, McCausland, R, Baldry, E, Burton, P, White, R, & Thomas, S 2021, *Exiting prison with complex support needs: the role of housing assistance- external site opens in new window*, AHURI Final Report No. 361, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited.

Ooi, EJ 2018, *Recent trends in the NSW female prison population*, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, January, viewed 14 January 2025, <https://bocsar.nsw.gov.au/research-evaluations/2018/bb130-recent-trends-in-the-nsw-female-prison-population.html>

Pisani, A, Sinclair, K and Rahman, S 2022, 'Trends in the Aboriginal female adult custodial population in NSW, March 2013 to February 2021', NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, September, viewed 14 January 2025, <https://bocsar.nsw.gov.au/research-evaluations/2022/bb161-summary-trends-in-the-female-aboriginal-custodial-population.html>

Sotiri, M 2020, *Submission to Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry into Homelessness*, Sydney, Community Restorative Centre, viewed 14 January 2025, <https://www.crcnsw.org.au/advocacyresearch/publications/submissions-and-response-to-inquiries/>