

Bethlehem House Inc.

# Bethlehem House experience of operating a Post-Release Options Project (PROP)

Senate Legal and Constitutional inquiry: Value of  
a justice reinvestment approach to criminal  
justice in Australia.

**40.40**

**2013**

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## Terms of Reference

The value of a justice reinvestment approach to criminal justice in Australia, with particular reference to:

- (a) the drivers behind the past 30 years of growth in the Australian imprisonment rate;
- (b) the economic and social costs of imprisonment;
- (c) the over-representation of disadvantaged groups within Australian prisons, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people experiencing mental ill-health, cognitive disability and hearing loss;
- (d) the cost, availability and effectiveness of alternatives to imprisonment, including prevention, early intervention, diversionary and rehabilitation measures;
- (e) the methodology and objectives of justice reinvestment;
- (f) the benefits of, and challenges to, implementing a justice reinvestment approach in Australia;
- (g) the collection, availability and sharing of data necessary to implement a justice reinvestment approach;
- (h) the implementation and effectiveness of justice reinvestment in other countries, including the United States of America;
- (i) the scope for federal government action which would encourage the adoption of justice reinvestment policies by state and territory governments; and
- (j) any other related matters.

## Abstract

The Senate Committee's inquiry into "value of re-investment to criminal justice in Australia" is an opportunity to highlight the successful Bethlehem House PROP program that has benefited the Tasmanian community. Further bring to the Senate the need to ensure continues funding of these re-investment programs is essential. The funding for the Bethlehem House PROP program ceased in 2011 and cannot continue beyond June 2013.

Based on the records over the last four years the return on investment has result in a saving \$40.40 for every \$1.00 dollar invested in the PROP program.

There is a need to assist the disadvantaging ex-prisoners seeking to change their offending behaviour and find alternative pro-social identities other than offender.

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## History of Bethlehem House

In 1972, the St Vincent de Paul Society purchased a run-down Guest House at 56 Warwick Street to convert into an overnight shelter for homeless men and named it Bethlehem House. At that time the doors were opened at 5.00 pm each night, guests were given a towel and pyjama's on entry and required to leave the House by 8.00 am the next morning. One year later the founding members recognised that it was uncompassionate to expect homeless men to wander the streets during the day; it became a 24-hour service, operated by a pool of volunteers.

This occurred 4 decades ago and many things have happened and changed over that time. At one period in history, up to 50 men were accommodated in dormitory type rooms.

Bethlehem House is proud that it has operated continuously 24 hours every day of the year for many years now. 24-hour operation is a unique feature of our service as men's homeless shelters nation-wide have largely stayed with the traditional 5 pm to 8 am entry routine with no surety of accommodation night to night.

40 years on we are now a stand-alone incorporated organisation that is mostly funded via DHHS Housing Tasmania services.

### Bethlehem House Today

- Provides 29 beds plus 1 overnight emergency bed at the House. This includes the availability of 12 beds for men experiencing an episode of homelessness provided under the Specialist Homeless Services Program (SHS) for crisis accommodation up to 6 weeks. The other beds are for mostly men for whom semi supported accommodation is the best mid to longer-term option.
- One x 3 bedroom share house adjacent to Bethlehem House called Hallam House. Hallam House offers a 'step in between' accommodation in the main house and further step forward into either transitional or independent accommodation.
- 4 x 1 bedroom units in Hobart suburbs. This accommodation may be transitional and for men who are able to live independently with outreach support from the House, Mental Health services and / or other supporting agencies.
- Rents from Housing Tasmania 2 x 2 bedroom properties (we currently have a single father and his children in one of these).
- Provides meals, laundry and shower facilities and other support services to single men in need.

- Has a strong emphasis on consumer participation in the day-to-day planning and operations of the service.

Casual clients and non-residents, men over the age of 20, may access the House from Monday to Friday between the hours of 7.30 am – 9.30 am and 3.00 pm – 5.30 pm.

A number of casual clients utilize our service for breakfast and evening meals, showers and laundry. Non-residents have access to the lounge rooms, courtyard, laundry and dining areas of the house. There are toilets and showers available to non-residents and they are also supported through the generous donation of toiletry bags donated by the Catholic Women's League and care packs donated by St Vincent de Paul Society and Mornington Community Church.

All clients who access the service generally have complex support needs. There are a range of attending complexities that lead to homelessness, some of these include Physical and Mental Health issues, Alcohol and other drug abuse, mild intellectual disability or acquired brain injury, history of grief, trauma and loss, previous incarceration in the criminal justice system and estrangement from family and social connectedness.

## Introduction

Bethlehem House welcomes the opportunity to submit to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee inquiry of “The value of a justice reinvestment approach to criminal justice in Australia”.

Bethlehem House has been running a Post Release Options Project since 2008, initially funded by the National Crime Prevention Program as a part of a national crime prevention strategy.

## What is Justice Reinvestment?

In his Policy Essay Rob Allen<sup>1</sup> states that Justice Reinvestment “... means many things to many people. The diffuse meanings attached to all of these ideas give them a wide appeal.” *“In the case of JR (Justice Reinvestment), what better approach can there be in a time of financial austerity than one that produces greater safety for citizens through redeploying some of the wasteful sums spent needlessly on imprisonment to strengthen the capacity of crime-stricken neighbourhoods to deal with the problem? There is something in such a policy for fiscal conservatives and liberal progressives alike.”*

The Justice Committee of the House of Commons reported in their inquiry document:

*“ 9. “Justice reinvestment” is a term that refers to a variety of approaches to criminal justice policy reform developed in the USA over the last 10 years which have sought to tackle burgeoning prison populations by addressing the root causes of criminality. The growth in prison numbers in the US has placed enormous pressure on state budgets. Whatever their political allegiance, state governments have been faced with stark choices about whether to continue to spend public money on meeting the projected demand for prison beds or whether to consider ways of reducing that demand and introducing alternative measures which produce more cost-effective contributions to public safety.*

*10. At its simplest ‘justice reinvestment’ refers to the persuasive proposition that it is far better—and probably much cheaper—to focus resources on preventing criminality than solely on catching, convicting and incarcerating criminals. The approach, in effect, looks to implement effectively the ‘getting tough on the causes of crime’ half of the Labour Party’s original statement of purpose on criminal justice before the 1997 election. Justice reinvestment seeks to reverse what many have argued to be a grave and expensive failure of social policy which leads to prison becoming a stand-in health and welfare system for people with problems—often bundles of problems related to legacies of low literacy, unmet mental health needs and/or drug and alcohol dependencies—that society in general, and their local services in particular, have*

*failed to deal with. It also challenges policymakers to think carefully about the consequences of some criminal justice measures that are considered to be 'tough on crime', for example, by encouraging criminal justice agencies to seek to enhance offenders' compliance with community orders rather than to focus on the enforcement of breaches."*<sup>ii</sup>

Shadd Maruna<sup>iii</sup> in his Policy Essay observes "...justice reinvestment (hereafter, JR) has enjoyed all this success even though the idea is still 'in its infancy', has been only 'sort of' defined, is not based on 'strong empirical foundations', and above all, does not really qualify as being a proper 'theory!' "

The Justice reinvestment campaign for aboriginal young people provides the message that:

- *"Justice reinvestment is about taking dollars out of prisons and putting them back into communities. When implemented, justice reinvestment programs benefit entire communities, not just aboriginal young people.*
- *Justice reinvestment is a good investment – both socially and economically."*

Mick Gooda<sup>iv</sup>, in his presentation in 2010, points out:

*"The Social Justice Report 2009 recommended that all states and Territory governments consider justice reinvestment in tandem with their plans to build new prisons. A percentage of funding that is targeted to prison beds should be diverted to trail communities where there are high rates of indigenous offenders."*

***"The evidence tells us that justice reinvestment is a success story in the USA.***

In the US imprisonment rates are dropping in places when justice reinvestment is being implemented. For example, there was a 72% drop in juvenile incarceration in Oregon, after money was invested in well-resourced restorative justice and community service programs for juvenile offenders.

Texas reinvested \$241 million in treatment programs and improved probation and parole services, instead of in prisons. There was a saving of \$210.5 million in the 2008-09 financial year and Texan prison population stopped growing for the first time in decades."

The Australian Human Rights Commission Social Justice report 2009<sup>v</sup> defines:

*"Justice reinvestment is a localised criminal justice policy approach that diverts a portion of the funds for imprisonment to local communities where there is a high concentration of offenders. The money that would have been spent on imprisonment is reinvested in programs and services in communities where these issues are most acute in order to address the underlying causes of crime in those communities.*

*Justice reinvestment still retains prison as a measure for dangerous and serious offenders but actively shifts the culture away from imprisonment and starts providing*

*community wide services that prevent offending. Justice reinvestment is not just about reforming the criminal justice system but trying to prevent people from getting there in the first place.*

*Justice reinvestment is a model that has as much in common with economics as social policy. Justice reinvestment asks the question: is imprisonment good value for money? The simple answer is that it is not. We are spending ever increasing amounts on imprisonment while at the same time, prisoners are not being rehabilitated, recidivism rates are high and return to prison rates are creating overcrowded prisons.”*

## Bethlehem House, Post Release Options Project (PROP)

### The Project

In 2008 the Post Release Options Project (PROP) was funded as a specialist project under the National Crime Prevention Program. The main objective of PROP was to engage with male inmates in Southern Tasmania, assessed as being at medium to high risk of re-offending post release.

The intensive case management model is based on a comprehensive risk/need assessment, followed by development of an individual case plan involving counselling, support, pro-social modelling and a range of interventions facilitated by referral to preferred service agencies.

Contact with clients commences three months prior to release and continues approximately twelve months post release. The project targets the causal traits or circumstances (criminogenic needs) that lead to criminal attitudes and behaviour. The program is voluntary and relies on clients being motivated to address their offending behaviour.

### Project Background

The lead up to the establishment of the PROP Program was marked by significant concern about high rates of prisoner repeat offending.

‘One of the characteristics shared by prisoners in different countries is a high probability of being convicted and reimprisoned’ (Ross 2003: 15). ‘Released prisoners are characterised by chronic social disadvantage, poor physical and mental health and high rates of substance misuse – a continuation of problems experienced prior to imprisonment [and] high rates of recidivism, suicide and fatal drug overdoses in the months after release from custody indicate that not all prisoners are successfully integrated into the community after release’ (Kinner & Williams 2006: 1).

The following tables illustrate the extent of recidivism throughout Australia.

<b>Prisoners released who return to <i>prison</i> within two years, 2001-02 to 2005-06 (states/territories)</b>									
	<b>NSW</b>	<b>Vic.</b>	<b>Qld</b>	<b>WA</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>Tas.</b>	<b>ACT</b>	<b>NT</b>	<b>Aust.</b>
2001-02	46.3	42.5	29.5	41.2	29.2	37.7	Na	33.6	40.1
2002-03	44.1	41.1	33.2	37	32.4	38.8	Na	37.1	39.6
2003-04	42.9	40.1	34.1	38.2	30.8	39.3	Na	40.4	39.6
2004-05	43.5	38.3	30.6	40.6	31.7	37.8	Na	44.2	39.3
2005-06	43.3	36.5	27.6	40.3	41.1	39.3	Na	46.4	38.3

Figure 1 Return to Prison rate 2001 - 06

<b>Prisoners released who return to <i>Corrective Services</i> within two years, 2005-06 (states/territories)</b>									
	<b>NSW</b>	<b>Vic.</b>	<b>Qld</b>	<b>WA</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>Tas.</b>	<b>ACT</b>	<b>NT</b>	<b>Aust.</b>
2005-06	46.1	44.8	37.5	49.7	52.7	46.7	na	49.9	45.2

Figure 2 Prisoners return rate 2005 - 06

Sentencing Advisory Council - Sentencing Statistics

Source: Report on Government Services, 2007

About 5% of prisoners in Australia are serving life or other indeterminate sentences (ABS 4517.0, 2007: 12), ‘however many more spend only a short time in custody, before being returned to the environment from which they came’ (Kinner & Williams 2006: 3). In 2007, 61% of sentenced prisoners in Australia were serving terms of less than five years and 34% were serving sentences of less than two years (ABS 4517.0, 2007:12). ‘Because of this “revolving door” phenomenon, the number of prison releases each year greatly exceeds the number of prisoners [and] although the exact number of releases each year is not known, 44,000 may be a reasonable estimate’ (Baldry, McConnell, Maplestone & Peters 2003 cited in Kinner & Williams 2006: 3).

Males comprise 93% (25,240) of the total prisoner population, with the number of male prisoners increasing by 5% (1,277) in the 12 months 30 June 2006 to 2007 (ABS 4517.0, 2007: 7). Over the 10 years to June 2007, the number of male prisoners increased by 40%, from 18,038 to 25,240 (ABS 4517.0, 2007:7). During the same period, Tasmania recorded the highest proportional change in male imprisonment rates, an increase of 82% - from 149 to 272 male prisoners per 100,000 adult male population (ABS 4517.0: 6, 2007). Tasmania also had the highest proportion of sentenced prisoners (19%) with an offence of sexual assault. (ABS 4517.0, 2007:10).

According to the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute [AHURI] (2004), and based on findings by Baldry, McDonnell, Maplestone and Peeters (2003) on the role of housing in preventing re-offending, ex-prisoners were more likely to stay out of prison if they:

- were living with parents, partner or close family
- had employment or were studying
- had contact with and support from helpful agencies post-release

Ex-prisoners were more likely to return to prison if they:

- were homeless or transient
- did not have accommodation support or felt the support was unhelpful
- had an increase in the severity of alcohol and other drug problems

- were Aboriginal or a Torres Strait Island
- were a woman, or
- had debt or debts

‘Being transient (moving house two or more times within a three month period) [also] made tackling drug and alcohol problems more difficult for individuals’ (AHURI 2004: 1). Similarly, participants in the *Bridging the Gap* program, ‘had an average of two address changes and about one in eight moved five or more times’ in the six months after release (Ross 2003: 6). The following key themes emerged from the *Bridging the Gap* program evaluation in Victoria:

- the severity of the problems and disadvantages facing released prisoners and the need for long-term support
- the centrality of drug dependence in post-release failure and re-offending
- the role of community-based agencies and the need for a co-ordinated approach in the delivery of post-release services
- the nature of post-release success and failure and the importance of personal agency in lifestyle change (Ross and Ryan 2003)

‘Most people leaving prison are released direct to freedom – in effect they go from an environment of total institutional control one day, to an environment of total freedom the next’ (Ross 2003: 20).

‘Ultimately success in re-integrating into the community after spending time in prison is part of a more general process of changing from being an offender to being a non-offender, or *desistence* from crime’ (Ross 2003: 25). Maruna (2001) argues that those who desist from offending are able to re-conceive who they are in a way that supports desistence, referring to this process as the construction of a “redemptive script” that allows the offender to set aside his or her old offending identity and construct a new non-offending identity. ‘Key elements in this process include the need to deal with the personal shame and remorse associated with having been an offender and the growth of self-respect in one’s new identity’ (Leibrich 1996 cited in Ross 2003: 26). ‘It could be argued that unless released prisoners are willing and able to make the psychological adjustments necessary to live non-offending lives in the community, no amount of social support is likely to produce a significant change in re-integration success’. (Ross 2003: 24).

Kinner and Williams (2006: 7) in Queensland found that ‘currently, post-release services for ex-prisoners are provided on an ad-hoc basis, at a level well below need and until needs based services are developed, trialled and independently evaluated, ex-prisoners will continue to die at rates well above their community counterparts, and the majority will continue to re-lapse, re-offend and return to the beginning of the imprisonment cycle’ These authors also maintain that few studies in Australia or elsewhere have explored the post-release experience of prisoners, but the few that have followed prisoners prospectively from custody to community paint a grim picture. They refer to a 2002 study by Baldry, McConnell, Maplestone and Peters (2003), ‘that followed a group of 238 prisoners from NSW and

Victorian prisons which found that at nine months post-release 21% were homeless, and that unstable accommodation, debt and heroin dependence were all significant unique predictors of re-incarceration' (cited in Kinner & Williams 2006: 3).

More recently a similar study of Queensland prisoners (Kinner, in press) found that 'by one month post-release 55% had returned to illicit drug use (29% injecting drugs) and that by four months post-release 42% were consuming alcohol at hazardous or harmful levels. By six months post-release, 19% had been reincarcerated in Queensland, with the risk of incarceration significantly greater for males, those with a history of injecting drug use, and those who reported – prior to release – that they expected to use illicit drugs post-release' (Kinner & Williams 2006: 3).

According to Crawley and Sparks (2007: 73) 'the post-release pathway often begins with a lack of clarity at the prison gate about where they are going to live, how they are going to get there (with limited money) and whom they will be living with'. Once in the community, good intentions translate into frustration as employment and other opportunities are diminished by the 'ex-criminal' label. This lack of support has been identified as a contributor to re-offending and it is these types of inadequacies that the Post Release Options [PROP] program aims to address through a process of intensive consultation and collaboration and 'by encouraging supporting community connections that shield against criminal lifestyles' (Borzycki, 2005).

## What is the PROP Project?

The Post Release Options Project began as an initiative of Bethlehem House, in association with the School of Sociology and Social Work (Criminology Research Unit), University of Tasmania), funded by the ANZ Trustees (Charitable Works).

The objectives of the project were to:

- assess current issues and problems in relation to prisoner post-release needs, and
- develop strategies and protocols for greater co-ordination between relevant government and non-government agencies and a more collaborative approach to service issues in this area

Key issues considered by the project team included:

- the lack of a maintaining and co-ordinating structure with recurrent funding
- potential duplication of post-release services
- developing a more formal collaborative framework involving key stakeholders
- identifying the opportunities and barriers to collaborative service delivery
- recognising that failure to co-ordinate services adequately is linked to higher recidivism rates

These issues were discussed at a roundtable forum attended by key government and non-government representatives on 4 September 2006. The forum was addressed by the Hon Steve Kons, then Minister for Justice, who participated in a series of workshops to identify critical post-release issues for prisoners and opportunities and barriers to collaborative service delivery.

Post-release needs were framed in terms of 'relationships', in the context of spatial, financial, emotional and social needs and identified as:

- stable accommodation
- employment
- financial planning
- transport
- life skills
- health and wellbeing
- sport and recreation
- education and training
- legal aid
- family support
- pastoral care, and
- community connectedness

Opportunities and barriers to service collaboration were separately grouped under several broad headings:

Opportunities for collaboration	Barriers to collaboration
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Leadership and accountability</li> <li>2. Shared vision and resources</li> <li>3. Diversity in decision-making</li> <li>4. Levels of Commitment</li> <li>5. Relationship &amp; Information Sharing</li> <li>6. Improved Service Delivery</li> <li>7. Evaluation and monitoring</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Locality</li> <li>Funding and resources</li> <li>Governance, Leadership &amp; accountability</li> <li>Relationships, Information Sharing &amp; Communication</li> <li>Conflicting culture</li> <li>Processes</li> <li>7. Workplace dynamics</li> </ol>
<b>Issues surrounding post-release service delivery</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pre-release preparation</li> <li>2. Communication/Relationships</li> <li>3. Resources</li> <li>4. Organisational/Cultural issues</li> <li>5. Community perception</li> <li>6. Political will</li> </ol>	

Figure 3 Opportunities and barriers to service collaboration

The Roundtable forum was instrumental in progressing dialogue between government and non-government agencies on collaborative delivery of post-release support services in Tasmania. Bethlehem House was subsequently successful in securing funding from the National Community Crime Prevention program (NCCPP) to take the project forward.

## What is the PROP Program?

The Post Release Options Program is the outcome of the PROP **project** initiatives. The **program** aims to:

- provide intensive transitional support to male ex-prisoners identified as being at high risk of re-offending
- initially deliver services to men across the Hobart metropolitan and southern Tasmania area (inner city, suburban and country areas), in collaboration with prisoners, prisoners' families, and government and community agencies
- change the social environments and motivational conditions of ex-prisoners

The program comprises a 12 week pre-release component for incarcerated prisoners (facilitated by the Tasmanian Prison Service Integrated Offender Management [IOM] team) and a 12 month post-release component (facilitated by two PROP case managers in the community), utilising the expertise of nominated key service providers.

The PROP program was developed on the premise that it is insufficient to simply address ex-prisoners' ongoing structural needs (e.g., housing, income, food), without at the same time addressing causal criminogenic factors (e.g., drug use, aggressiveness). PROP intended to address structural needs by utilising existing service providers and focussing on criminogenic need through provision of intensive support, information and advice on the impulse to offend. The balance of support and referrals was to be dictated by the individual's needs, and provided in the social context of the ex-prisoner and their family.

The program was meant to utilise a partnership approach which negotiates and brokers to meet identified needs from the range of services required and initiate, sponsor and maintain a whole of community response to the transition process. This would allow PROP to work with current support agencies as well as linking prisoners with the communities to which they will eventually return. Tailoring of the service was meant to enhance responsivity and shape support plans for good post-release outcomes (Borzycki 2005). Responsivity refers to the attempt to match the delivery of the intervention to the characteristics of the participant – including such things as motivation, learning style, immediate needs and ethnic identity.

PROP would have to rely on the co-operation of the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) team at Risdon Prison for appropriate referrals. While this is the optimum arrangement, there would remain opportunities for stakeholders apart from TPS to refer. PROP case

managers were to build on the reintegration plans provided by the IOM team for each participant. The working relationship with IOM was to be very close and involve sharing information (in accordance with the Privacy Act) regarding the offender's post release structural and criminogenic needs. The PROP transition service was to provide regular feedback to the IOM team regarding progress made. Each referral made to PROP was to be entered into a register maintained by IOM so that the target key performance indicator (KPI) for reoffending could be measured.

PROP is the first program in Australia to offer continuity of support to prisoners and their families for a period of 12 months post-release. By comparison, the *Bridging the Gap* pilot program in Victoria provided services for six months post-release. Prisoners who accepted a place were recruited at least six weeks prior to their release date. Under that program prisoners who accepted the offer of a place were recruited to the program at least six weeks before their release date. The program model envisaged a post-release engagement period of six months, 'commencing with a period of intensive involvement between worker and participant beginning on the day of release, and lasting a few weeks or months until the participant was settled' (Ross 2003: 10).

PROP also has the potential to positively influence some of the 'traditional' situational obstacles to the provision of rehabilitative services, identified by Kinner & Williams (2006: 4) as:

- an entrenched punitive culture in the criminal justice system, coupled with a variable commitment to rehabilitation as part of incarceration
- a misperception that rehabilitation is at odds with custodial security
- limited access to rehabilitative programs, particularly for prisoners serving sentences of less than 12 months who are ineligible for many programs.

## **Achievements by Bethlehem House PROP program 2008 -2010**

The Bethlehem House PROP program was funded from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2008 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2010 by the Australian Government Attorney-General's Department under the National Community Crime Prevention Programme (NCCPP). Part of the funding agreement required that progressive and a final external evaluation be conducted. The ongoing evaluation was conducted by the School of Sociology & Social Work University of Tasmania with Rob White as the Chief Investigator.

From the final evaluation report, released in January 2011, the following was extracted.<sup>vi</sup>

### ***Overview of Program Outcomes***

The program began in January 2008, at which time considerable time was devoted to the development of infrastructure. This involved setting up an office space, development of policies and procedures for the programme, development of the PROP reintegration assessment tool, and the dissemination of information regarding PROP to the Tasmanian Prison Service (TPS) Integrated Offender Management unit in order to begin the referral process.

Over the last three years, some 82 clients have been dealt with, most of whom have not re-offended. Engagement and completion figures for this period include:

	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total
Total each year of clients referred	33	27	22	24	106
Number of agencies to which PROP clients were referred	13	32	56	86	
Number of clients who completed	0	1	12	14	

Figure 4 PROP engagements 2008 - 11

When the NCCPP funding ended Bethlehem House received interim funding to continue the PROP program to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2011 and continued with the remaining 24 clients of which 16 completed within that time frame.

During the life of the program 8 clients re-offended during their tenure and one offended after completing the PROP program.

In interpreting these figures it is useful to bear in mind several things. First, data collection and data management at the beginning of the programme took a while to set up and to be fine-tuned. Secondly, due to teething problems in the filtering process at the commencement, PROP initially dealt with some referrals that were inappropriate and as such these clients were more likely to 'fail' vis-à-vis attaining PROP objectives (because essentially they did not match the preferred client profile for the programme).

Performance of the clients and the programme has improved over time as issues of data collection and client referral have been attended to, and a cohesive network of agency referrals has been developed. Post-Release plans are developed collaboratively with each client in a two-stage process and tailored to individual need. A Transition Plan is developed and implemented pre-release. After release, this changes to a Reintegration Plan which incorporates longer term goals and broader lifestyle change.

In February 2013 a follow up retrospective review of the clients involved in the 2008 – 11 PROP program found that only 34 have returned to prison, an efficacy rate of 57.3% that have not returned to prison since participating in post release program. This cohort have

resulting in over 122 years of post-prison crime free time for the men that appear to have assimilated back into the Tasmanian community.

In the February 2013 release ANCD Research paper 24<sup>vii</sup> quotes a cost per prisoner day for 2012-13 to be \$406.50 in Tasmania, and in their article on the 4<sup>th</sup> March 2013 The Examiner<sup>viii</sup> quotes “costing the state \$383 per prisoner per day”. This equates to an annual cost per prison of between \$140,178 and \$148,779, averaging to approximately \$144,500 per year.

Based on current indicative cost of imprisonment has resulted in a return on investment ratio of 40.4 to 1 for every dollar invested on the PROP program. Coupled with the savings of both financial and emotion cost of crime this has had a very beneficial outcome to the community of Tasmania.

The retrospective review has also highlighted several other interesting observations that may require further investigation, figure 5 below represents the chronological path of the sample with a trend line indicating increasing crime free days after release before being resentenced and returning to prison. The date range is released from 27-Oct-08 to 11-Dec-12, the horizontal axis is the total sample of ex-offenders and vertical axis is the number of days before being re sentenced back to prison. The majority of reason for sentencing was breach of parole and this is in line with national data rather than by another crime act against the Tasmanian community.

This suggests that the efficacy of the program may be improving over time, perhaps the therapeutic relationship is a factor with 3 different case workers in the period of this sample and that there may be other factors such as age or maturation in older prisoners etc. it does tend to present that there are two active cohorts; the ones that offend reasonably soon after release and the ones that pursue a path of desistance but fail later in the two year period.

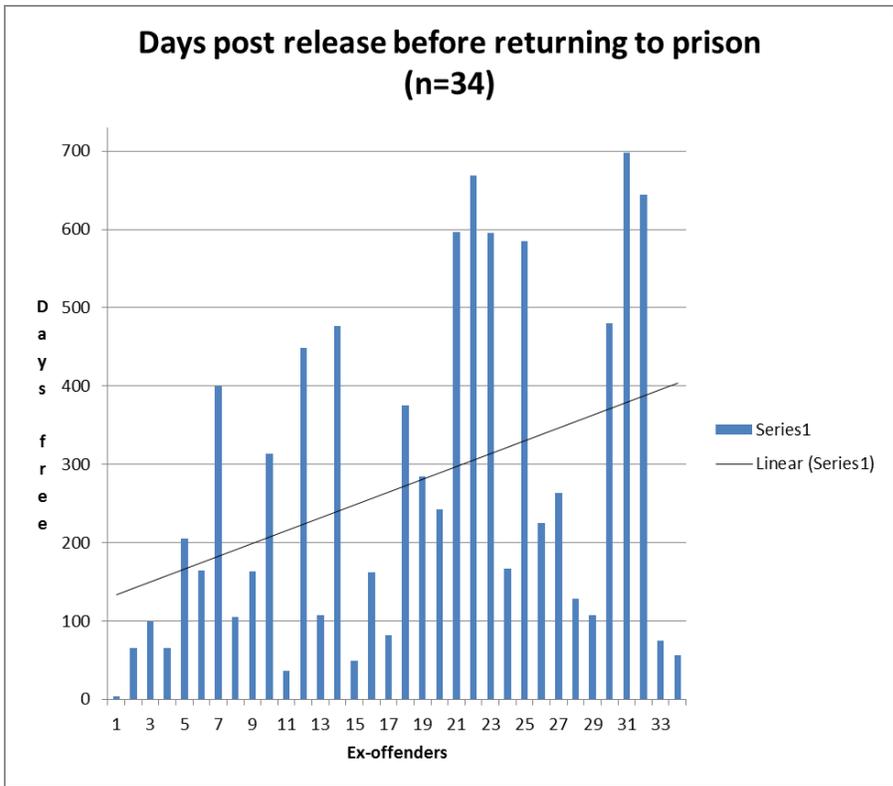


Figure 5 Days post-release

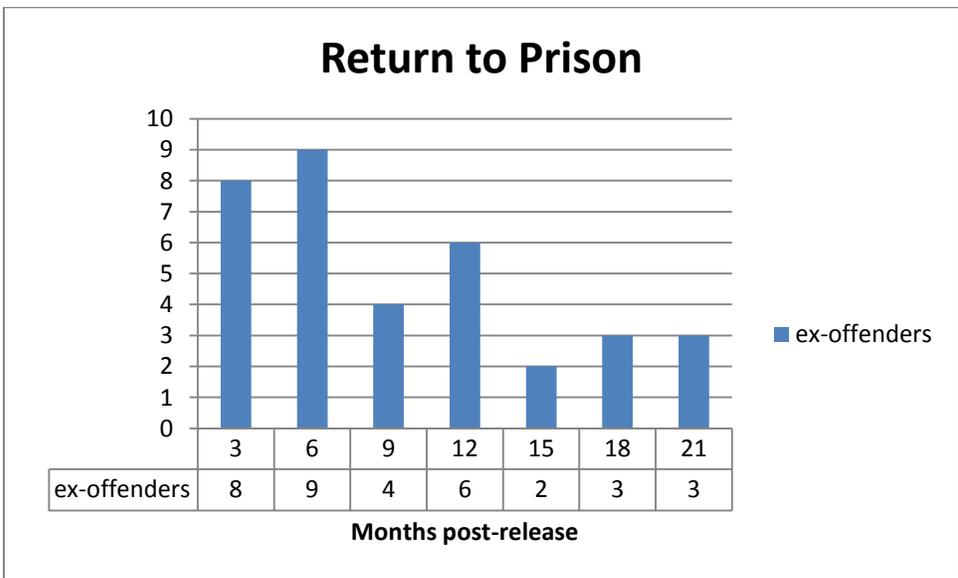


Figure 6 Grouped return to prison PROP

Figure 6 above shows that over three-quarters of those that re-offended did so within the first twelve months, which demonstrates the necessity for an effective program to be for at least twelve months intervention. We need to be mindful that the majority were for breach of

parole rather than re-offending by an act of criminal offence against the Tasmanian community.

## Achievements by Bethlehem House PROP program 2012 - 2013

In 2011 further one off small grants were obtained to continue Bethlehem House PROP program. Due to internal issues the program was hibernated until a new worker started in February 2012 and will continue until June 2013. With one part-time worker this program has engaged with twenty pre-release prisoners and currently working with eight post-release clients. Having learnt from the previous program this newer program focuses on developing a strong therapeutic relationship with the clients. Through intensive counselling the client's old and new belief systems are being explored. Awareness and understanding of those old belief systems is assisting in new behaviour and thought patterns being established, resulting in an offence freer lifestyle.

Without a genuine justice reinvestment model in Tasmania this program is unsustainable and will cease to be sustainable resulting in its closure on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2013. This will disadvantage the current caseload and future Bethlehem House PROP participants who will continue to be released from prison without a suitable program to assist them in their desistance from crime, and potentially encourage recidivist behaviour.

## Client Affirmation of PROP

From the evaluation of the 2008 – 11 PROP program:

*I feel different in the head all the time, you know, and I know they [PROP] are trying to help me and I'm trying to help meself... and before that I've never had a chance to do ... to help meself ... but right now I have.....but if PROP wasn't there... I would be getting nowhere and I'd be ...I'd re-offend again. The reason is ... it's probably cause that point of having no one to talk to, but now... you've got someone to talk to and help.. help you.. achieve this goal now and it's completely different... and that's right too, really*

### *Client profile*

*The client is what the literature typically describes as a “career” criminal, with a significant history of recidivism. He indicated this was the first time he had participated in a post-release program. The client self-referred to the program, having seen Post Release Options Program (PROP) advertised in the prison newsletter, assessed by PROP as eligible for the program, on the basis that he was at high risk of reoffending and was motivated and willing to change. In his own words*

*“I'd done so much jail... and I wanted to rehabilitate my life”*

### *Intervention*

*At the time he engaged with the program, the client was approximately 3 months out from release and facing a number of challenges including housing, an ongoing legal dispute and relationships issues. He described himself as*

*“being pretty well mucked up in the head”*

*He explained how PROP had assisted him with housing and legal advice, as well as helped him to positively re-engage with a significant family member, following a period of estrangement due to his repeated offending.*

*One of the things the client valued most about PROP was the client/case worker relationship, the regular visits and a listening ear, a rapport which was forged in the pre-release component of the program and which continued outside, in the community. The relationship was based on a high level of trust which stemmed from the fact that the client perceived that PROP had delivered what it promised and that his case manager listened and acted upon the issues raised during consultation. This had a noticeable impact on his self-esteem*

*“Since I started talking to XXXX I feel a different person in myself”*

“I feel different in the head all the time, you know, and I know they [PROP] are trying to help me and I’m trying to help meself... and before that I’ve never had a chance to do ... to help meself ... but right now I have...

Looking to the future, with PROP’s assistance, the client plans to move from his current home to one where negative peer influence is reduced and preferably eliminated, so that he can get on with his life unencumbered by the perceptions and judgements of others about his new direction.

*His case manager has provided him with some tools to help him to, as he puts it “think differently” and to step back from situations that in the past may have precipitated the violent episodes which led to his offending. Clearly, at this point in his transition, PROP is an important influence in his life*

*...but if PROP wasn’t there... I would be getting nowhere and I’d be ...I’d re-offend again. The reason is ... it’s probably cause that point of having no one to talk to, but now... you’ve got someone to talk to and help.. help you.. achieve this goal now and it’s completely different... and that’s right too, really*

Feedback from the current cohort shows a very similar outcomes

*Client A was released early June 2012 after serving two separate sentences of eight year durations. He has been actively working with his PROP case worker to address the underlining issues causing his previous recitative behaviour. He disclosed that he found himself home most of the time due to not having a driver’s license and the limited public transport as he resided in a semi-rural area with his partner and three children. The client stated that he had thought about having a drink to help him cope with the boredom. The caseworker suggested volunteer work as an option and the benefits were outlined. The client and caseworker attended an appointment with Volunteer Australia and were then referred to Conservation Volunteer Australia. The client was accepted as a volunteer and he attended an induction the following day. Protective clothing was sourced and the client has now started as a volunteer.*

*An inmate was released on parole early December 2012 after receiving five months pre-release support. During this period a therapeutic relationship was established and a reintegration plan was developed. Not long after the Christmas break the client approached me and disclosed that he had used illicit drugs. The reason behind his drug use was explored and the client expressed that he missed his children and using drugs was his way of coping with the pain he was experiencing. The client was encouraged to disclose his drug use to his parole officer and the character building that stems from honesty was explained. The client courageously informed his parole officer and a meeting with the parole board to “please explain” was organised. Due to his overwhelming fear he did not attend the meeting with the parole board and was*

*arrested early February 2013. The case worker visited the client after his arrest and praised the honesty he showed with his parole officer. The client acknowledged that this degree of honesty was new behaviour and was evidence that change was slowly taking place. The fact that the client did not reoffend during his relapse into drug use was also brought to his attention. The client is due for release in six weeks and PROP will continue to support and work alongside him pre and post release.*

## Conclusion

Over the forty years that Bethlehem House has been operating it has been focused on the plight of the homeless or those at risk of homelessness including males being released from institutional care like prisons.

Bethlehem House took this to a new level with the introduction of the PROP program where it not only assisted the potential homelessness issue of ex-prisoners but also set up a program to assist them with desistance from crime. This program directly addresses reducing offending and developing the positives or strengths they may have, and can result in changes in identity and labelling from offender to pro-social identities such as volunteer or tax payer, community member, employee, etc.

The short Bethlehem House PROP projects has had significant impact on the desistance for nearly 100 males post-release, with a significant reduction in the cost of recidivism and the economic and social cost of crime against the Tasmanian community.

Based on the Bethlehem House PROP program 2008-11 the reinvestment of justice has result in a saving \$40.40 for every \$1.00 dollar invested in the PROP program.

Without a substantial and urgent justice re-investment in the Bethlehem House PROP this program will cease on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2013, disadvantaging ex-prisoners seeking to change their offending behaviour and find alternative pro-social identities other than offenders.

## References

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<sup>v</sup> [http://humanrights.gov.au/social\\_justice/sj\\_report/sjreport09/chap2.html](http://humanrights.gov.au/social_justice/sj_report/sjreport09/chap2.html)

<sup>vi</sup> An Evaluation of the Post-Release Options Project (PROP) Final Report, Rob White and Nick O'Halloran School of Sociology & Social Work University of Tasmania, 31 January, 2011

<sup>vii</sup> An economic analysis for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offenders prison vs residential treatment A report prepared for the National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Committee, Australian National Council on Drugs, August 2012

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