

Corrective Services (Parole Board) Amendment Bill 2025

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SUBMISSION TO THE GOVERNANCE, ENERGY AND
FINANCE COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO THE CORRECTIVE
SERVICES (PAROLE BOARD) AMENDMENT BILL 2025

17 APRIL 2025

- The Justice Reform Initiative appreciates the opportunity to make a submission to the Governance, Energy and Finance Committee inquiry into the Corrective Services (Parole Board) Amendment Bill 2025.
- The Justice Reform Initiative does not support the rushed passage of this legislation given that it may have unintended consequences that work against the aims of parole in terms of preventing reoffending and improving community safety.
- We instead urge the Queensland Government to significantly invest in community-led services and programs that will support people released on parole to comply with their parole conditions, as an alternative way to achieve the policy objectives of the proposed amendments.
- The Justice Reform Initiative acknowledges that under the current process, the Board must convene within two business days to either confirm the decision, cancel the parole order, or set aside the decision in instances when a prescribed board member decides to suspend a person's parole order and issue a warrant for the person's arrest. However, the *Corrective Services Act 2006* (CSA) does not currently give the Board the power to convene to review a decision where a prescribed board member decides not to suspend person's parole order (i.e. keep them in the community).
- Giving the Board the legislative power to review a decision where a prescribed board member decides not to suspend a person's parole order may result in more people having their parole suspended/cancelled.
- There is a strong body of literature that suggests suspending a person's parole order and issuing a warrant for their arrest (and re-imprisonment) is actually likely to be detrimental to community safety. Recidivism and prior incarceration rates are useful indicators of the extent to which imprisonment 'works' to reduce the likelihood of future criminal justice system contact. 69% of people currently incarcerated in Queensland prisons have experienced prior incarceration.¹ In many cases, imprisonment itself exacerbates disadvantage, increasing the likelihood of ongoing criminal justice system involvement.²
- Standard parole positions often include:
 - be of good behaviour;
 - not commit any offence;

- submit to the supervision and guidance of the Community Corrections Officer;
 - be available for interview;
 - reside at an approved address;
 - not leave the jurisdiction without permission;
 - enter employment or training arranged or agreed on by the Officer;
 - notify the Officer of any intention to change their employment;
 - not associate with any person or persons specified by the Officer;
 - not use prohibited drugs, obtain drugs unlawfully or abuse drugs lawfully obtained.
- For many people released on parole complying with parole conditions can be particularly challenging and difficult, especially if they do not have access to holistic, intensive, long-term and relational support. This is particularly the case for people released on parole who reside in rural and regional communities. People who reside in rural and regional communities will often have limited transport options, particularly public transport options, to meet any parole reporting, treatment or employment requirements, and often have limited access to place-based, culturally-modelled holistic, intensive, long-term, flexible and relational support.
 - The consequences of failing to meet parole obligations and conditions can be particularly severe, even if the nature of the breach is only technical or minor. Where parole is breached resulting in a revocation of parole the person is returned to prison to serve out their prison sentence.
 - The Justice Reform Initiative considers that mere technical breaches of parole conditions should not result in parole being revoked and the person being returned to prison.
 - In addition, the Justice Reform Initiative considers that it is not appropriate for parole to be revoked for use of illicit drugs or possession of drugs for personal use. The Justice Reform Initiative considers that a person should not have their bail revoked and be returned to prison merely for personal use and possession of prohibited drugs in quantities consistent with personal use.
 - The Justice Reform Initiative is concerned that this legislation is being retrospectively applied to ensure that any decisions made by the appropriately convened Board were lawful in instances when the Board reviewed decisions of a prescribed board member in the past. Elected officials have a responsibility to be accountable to their legal obligations as set out in the CSA.
 - It is also important to note that almost every person who is incarcerated will eventually be released. Only 1% of people imprisoned in Australia are incarcerated for life.³ For the 99% of people in prison who will ultimately be released, the way in which custody is experienced, and the way in which release is experienced, are critical factors when it comes to reducing reoffending and reducing contact with the justice system.
 - There is now a growing body of evidence that shows the provision of long-term, intensive, holistic, flexible, and relational support can reduce offending on release by 62% and time in custody by 65%.⁴
 - Over the last five years the availability of housing for formerly incarcerated people has reduced significantly.⁵ As prison populations have increased, the need for housing and assistance post-release has likewise increased, resulting in people

leaving prison being the fastest growing category of clients of specialist homelessness services (SHS) over the past decade.⁶

- The need for stable, secure, affordable accommodation for people leaving prison is a critical issue, particularly for those who are seeking early release on parole. Difficulties in securing appropriately located and affordable accommodation may result in parole being denied, or people not being released despite being eligible for court-ordered parole, because they had no housing to which they could be released.
- If a person is successful in securing such accommodation but subsequently is unable to remain in that accommodation, that person may be in breach of their parole conditions and be returned to prison. The need for greater supply of stable, affordable accommodation is central to maximising the likelihood of successful early release on parole, including reintegration into the community and desistance from offending.
- The programs and principles for good practice in post-release (long term, holistic, housing first, wrap around, culturally safe, person centred, flexible) differ significantly in scope and approach to the 'Risk, Needs, Responsivity models' that many Corrections departments around Australia have committed to for the last decade. This distinction is important when designing community-led programs. Some Corrections designed post-release programs are primarily focused on addressing individual offending behaviour (for instance things like anger management and impulsivity) rather than addressing the social drivers of incarceration.
- The programs that have success in reducing recidivism note the importance of looking outside of 'offending behaviour' when working with people at risk of justice system involvement. Successful programs work with people holistically around a whole range of issues, including housing, alcohol and other drug treatment, employment, mental health and disability, and cultural and community connection, alongside the formulation of a sense of identity and belonging outside of the justice system.
- In 2024, there were 14,403 instances where people were released from Queensland prisons.⁷ In 2023-24, the Board considered 7,952 parole applications and granted 2,792 parole orders.⁸
- To our knowledge, the Queensland Government provided funding to the following community-led re-entry service providers to support adults leaving prison in 2023-24:
 - Australian Community Support Organisation: \$5,249,276
 - Bridges Health & Community Care Ltd: \$585,037
 - Coast2Bay Housing Group Ltd: \$19,155
 - SER04 Limited: \$2,377,270
 - YellowBridge QLD: \$336,155
 - Jacaranda Housing: \$79,655
 - Lives Lived Well: \$1,741,138
 - Open Minds Australia: \$1,504,207
 - St Vincent de Paul Society Queensland: \$1,749,685
 - **Total: \$13,641,578⁹**

- The total amount of \$13.6 million funding spent on community-led re-entry services and supports is **minimal** in comparison to the **\$1.4 billion** spent on operational and capital costs for prisons in Queensland in 2023-24 alone.¹⁰ This means only a fraction of people leaving prison in Queensland are receiving the services and supports that will help them to address the root causes of their offending.
- Over two-thirds of adults in prison in Queensland have been to prison before¹¹, suggesting the significant investment made into the prison system is failing to reduce reoffending and improve community safety. The Justice Reform Initiative strongly encourages the Queensland Government to make greater investment in community-led post-release support services who can provide long-term, intensive, holistic, flexible, and relational support to people leaving prison. As noted above, evidence tells us this has the potential to reduce offending on release by 62% and time in custody by 65%.¹²

ABOUT THE JUSTICE REFORM INITIATIVE

The Justice Reform Initiative is an alliance of people who share long-standing professional experience, lived experience and/or expert knowledge of the justice system, further supported by a movement of Australians of goodwill from across the country who believe jailing is failing and that there is an urgent need to reduce the number of people in Australian prisons.

The Justice Reform Initiative is committed to reducing Australia's harmful and costly reliance on incarceration. Our patrons include more than 120 eminent Australians, including two former Governors-General, former Members of Parliament from all sides of politics, academics, respected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, senior former judges including High Court judges, and many other community leaders who have added their voices to end the cycle of incarceration in Australia.

We seek to shift the public conversation and public policy away from building more prisons as the primary response of the criminal justice system and move instead to proven evidence-based approaches that break the cycle of incarceration. We are committed to elevating approaches that seek to address the causes and drivers of contact with the criminal justice system. We are also committed to elevating approaches that see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led organisations being resourced and supported to provide appropriate support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are impacted by the justice system.

The Queensland Patrons of the Justice Reform Initiative include:

- **Sallyanne Atkinson AO.** Co-Chair of the Queensland Interim Body for Treaty and a member of the Queensland University Senate.
- **Adjunct Professor Kerry Carrington.** School of Law and Society, University of the Sunshine Coast, and Director of her own Research Consultancy.
- **Mick Gooda.** Former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner and former Royal Commissioner into the Detention of Children in the Northern Territory.
- **Keith Hamburger AM.** Former Director-General, Queensland Corrective Services Commission.
- **Professor Emeritus Ross Homel, AO.** Foundation Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Griffith University.
- **Gail Mabo.** Gail is of the Meriam language group and clan of Mer (Murray Island) in the Torres Strait. She is an Australian visual artist who has had her work exhibited

across Australia and is represented in most major Australian art galleries and internationally. She was formerly a dancer and choreographer. Gail is also deeply engaged with young people in her community as a mentor and is the daughter of land rights campaigner Eddie Mabo and educator and activist Bonita Mabo AO.

- **Professor Elena Marchetti.** Griffith Law School, Griffith University.
- **The Honourable Margaret McMurdo AC.** Former President Court of Appeal, Supreme Court of Queensland and Commissioner of the Victorian Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants.
- **Dr Mark Rallings.** Former Commissioner, Queensland Corrective Services.
- **Greg Vickery AO.** Former President, Queensland Law Society and former Chair of the Standing Commission of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.
- **The Honourable Dean Wells.** Former Attorney General of Queensland.
- **The Honourable Margaret White AO.** Former Judge of the Queensland Supreme Court and Queensland Court of Appeal, former Royal Commissioner into the Detention of Children in the Northern Territory, and Adjunct Professor TC Berne School of Law UQ.

For further information or clarification, please feel free to contact:

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- ¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2024). Prisoners in Australia 2023, Table 14.
- ² Australian Productivity Commission 2021. Australia's Prison Dilemma, Research Paper, Canberra; Ruth McCausland and Eileen Baldry. 2023. "Who does Australia Lock Up? The Social Determinants of Justice", International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy. doi: 10.5204/ijcjsd.2504.E
- ³ ABS. 2024. Prisoners in Australia 2023, Table 12 and Table 1.
- ⁴ Dr Mindy Sotiri, Dr Ruth McCausland, Dr Rebecca Reeve, Lucy Phelan and Terry Byrnes. 2021. "They're there to support you and help you, they're not there to judge you" Breaking the cycle of incarceration, drug use and release: Evaluation of the Community Restorative Centre's AOD and reintegration programs. Report for NSW Health. 1 December 2021. 16-17.
- ⁵ Melanie Schwartz, Sophie Russell, Eileen Baldry, David Brown, Chris Cunneen, Julie Stubbs, Obstacles to Effective Support of People Released from Prison: Wisdom from the Field (Rethinking Community Sanctions Project, UNSW, 2020).
- ⁶ Martin, C., Reeve, R., McCausland, R., Baldry, E., Burton, P., White, R. and Thomas, S. (2021) Exiting prison with complex support needs: the role of housing assistance, AHURI Final Report No. 361, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/361>, doi: 10.18408/ahuri7124801, 86.
- ⁷ Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2025). Corrective Services Australia- Prisoner Receptions and Prisoner Releases- December quarter 2024, Table 24.
- ⁸ <https://pbq.qld.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/PBQ-Annual-Report-2023-24.pdf>
- ⁹ Queensland Government. (2025). 2023-24 consolidated QGIP expenditure. <https://www.data.qld.gov.au/dataset/queensland-government-investment-portal-expenditure-data-consolidated-view>
- ¹⁰ Source: Productivity Commission (2024). Report on Government Services 2024, Corrective Services Tables, Table 8A.1.
- ¹¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2024). Prisoners in Australia 2023, Table 14.
- ¹² Dr Mindy Sotiri, Dr Ruth McCausland, Dr Rebecca Reeve, Lucy Phelan and Terry Byrnes. 2021. "They're there to support you and help you, they're not there to judge you" Breaking the cycle of incarceration, drug use and release: Evaluation of the Community Restorative Centre's AOD and reintegration programs. Report for NSW Health. 1 December 2021. 16-17.