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07

Supported housing for prisoners returning to the community: A review of the literature

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Executive summary

Commissioned by Corrections Victoria to inform its future strategies for delivering housing support strategies to people leaving the prison system, this report presents literature that builds on two earlier reviews conducted in 2010 and 2013. Those earlier reviews identified a range of models and approaches to delivering housing support that embodied the key elements of good and promising practice. Since 2013, new literature has become available that builds on this evidence base—reasserting some of the earlier findings, adding clarity to others, and introducing new considerations.

Several recent studies have reinforced the need for housing support for people leaving prison. Interviews with police detainees show nearly a quarter were homeless or experienced housing stress in the month before arrest. A study by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute emphasised the role of demographic factors in contributing to homelessness, with 42 percent of homeless people found in just 10 percent of Australian regions. The demographic factors that contribute to homelessness tend to be the same as those that contribute to engagement with the criminal justice system, and there are substantial crossovers between homeless and correctional populations.

Other recent studies have highlighted the value of meeting the need for housing support. Studies conducted in the United Kingdom (UK) have shown that the costs of even resource-intensive housing support are substantially less than the costs of imprisonment and the harms that result from reoffending. Other studies have reinforced earlier findings on the association between housing stability and reduced recidivism, with former prisoners in stable housing much less likely to reoffend than those who are homeless or in unstable accommodation. While research has shown that all of the elements used in aftercare programs for ex-prisoners have the potential to be effective, including housing components—together with other aftercare support—enhanced an ex-prisoner's chances of successfully reintegrating into the community. Consistent with the risk principle of correctional programming, housing services produced the most effective outcomes for medium- and high-risk offenders in terms of reduced offending and order revocations.

Despite the demonstrated need for, and value of, providing housing support to released prisoners, recent evidence suggests the community is resistant to establishing transitional or other supported housing. A United States (US) survey of attitudes towards re-entry initiatives found a moderate degree of public support for the provision of housing support to offenders.

This support diminished rapidly when the assistance was intended for serious or repeat offenders, or when the hypothetical notion of a housing facility being established in the respondent's own neighbourhood was raised. The study found very little public support for transitional housing for violent and sex offenders.

The literature identified a number of models of housing support that offer clients varying degrees of control or choice. Custodial housing applications are most useful to people with severe mental illness who require strict controls, limited or no choice, and housing tied directly to treatment. The terms 'supportive housing' and 'supported housing' are used interchangeably in the literature. Various definitions of the terms have placed supportive housing in the realm of rehabilitation, with clients allowed increasing degrees of control and choice as they transition through decreasing levels of supervision; conversely, supported housing is used more for recovery-focused approaches, where clients live independently and choose from the range of flexible and individualised support services available to them. Not only is the terminology often used interchangeably, different models are not considered mutually exclusive: some programs will often blend supportive and supported housing, sometimes including emergency crisis accommodation and transitional housing in their service mix.

Evaluations of supportive and supported housing programs have shown they have the potential to deliver positive outcomes for clients including physical and financial security, greater social inclusion, stronger feelings of stability and control, and increased wellbeing. These evaluations—and related discussions of housing models—emphasise the application of these programs to psychiatric populations; care should be taken in assessing the applicability of any given approach to other vulnerable populations, including offenders.

In Australia, two dominant models of supportive housing have emerged. The Common Ground model is based on congregated housing with onsite support and social services, and has been implemented in five states by an alliance of housing providers. The scattered-site housing model utilises geographically dispersed accommodation, with clients receiving support services through outreach from allied organisations. Neither of these models should be considered fixed or rigid, with many different approaches and designs implemented. One of the features of both models is that clients receive flexible and individualised support. The nature and intensity of this support can vary widely across programs and between individuals, but the most effective models appear to be those that allow clients to determine the services they receive.

A range of different housing support models are in place across Australia, each aiming to provide stable and secure accommodation for offender clients at high risk of becoming homeless or experiencing housing instability. The Australian approaches are similar in many ways to those implemented in the US and the UK, even though the elements vary between programs and locations. Quite different models are in place in some European countries, reflecting the different ways offenders are managed in those countries. Practices in countries such as Germany and the Netherlands emphasise rehabilitation and normalisation, aiming to

ensure the experience of life in prison parallels life in the community as much as possible. People leaving prison in these countries have typically had substantial opportunities to maintain family relationships and to maintain or secure accommodation well before they are released.

One of the important areas addressed by recent literature is the emergence of difference financial models for supported housing, including social impact investment approaches. Often aligned with strategies such as justice reinvestment, social impact investments have taken forms such as social impact bonds and payment by results methods. Each of these strategies aims to deliver social reforms and interventions without substantial upfront costs or risks to government, through investment arrangements with commercial or philanthropic organisations. Social impact investments are potentially a way for government to deliver costly housing initiatives without impacting on other areas of need or government expenditure.

There is little clear evidence of the effectiveness of different housing models and different approaches to vulnerable groups within correctional populations. The evidence shows that sex offenders—particularly sexually violent offenders with strict limitations on their place of residence and movements—are at heightened risk of homelessness upon release from prison. International experience shows attempts to provide housing options for sexually violent offenders are likely to meet with substantial resistance from the community and local authorities. The literature has paid little attention to the housing support needs of Indigenous Australians released from prison.

Overall, a review of the recent literature on supported housing for correctional populations highlights the importance of flexible and individually oriented approaches to delivering housing support. Good practice in housing support focuses on individual needs and on the provision of appropriate degrees and types of individual choice and control. Holistic, integrated wraparound services, delivered through collaborative, multi-agency approaches and spanning a range of individual support and treatment needs, remain an integral part of good practice for housing support interventions.

Introduction

This report presents the findings of a review of the literature on housing support for people returning to the community following a period of imprisonment. The review was commissioned by Corrections Victoria in mid-2015 to inform future practice and policy development in the area of housing support for its clients. The report examines recent evidence for the importance of stable housing in achieving prisoner reintegration and reducing offending. It also looks at best practice in supported housing for correctional clients, and at emerging models for the delivery of supported housing services.

The literature review builds on and updates two previous literature reviews produced for Corrections Victoria: a review of best practice in correctional responsibility, including housing services, produced in mid-2010, and a mid-2013 report on transition services delivering housing and case management. The review therefore examines literature published from mid-2013 onwards. In a few instances literature pre-dating this period is presented—where it is particularly salient to the issues being discussed and warrants reiteration to give context to later work, or where it is relevant to the issues but was not addressed in the earlier reports.

Corrections Victoria Housing Program

This report was commissioned by Corrections Victoria. The findings of this literature review are therefore presented in the context of Corrections Victoria's existing involvement in delivering transitional support to offenders leaving prison custody.

Since 2001, Corrections Victoria and the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services have been responsible for program delivery in this area and have delivered programs including:

- the Corrections Housing Pathway Initiative (CHPI);
- the Corrections Victoria Housing Program (CVHP); and
- Intensive Transitional Support Programs (ITSPs).

Through the CVHP, Corrections Victoria provides access to housing together with individualised post-release case management and support. These services are intended to address disadvantage and to assist offenders who are leaving prison to successfully reintegrate into the community, resulting in a reduced risk of reoffending and reductions in the economic and social costs of crime.

The CVHP was the subject of a 2013 evaluation conducted by researchers from the University of Melbourne (Ross et al. 2013). The evaluation found high levels of homelessness among offenders entering correctional custody, with two thirds of the prisoners sampled having a pre-custody history of homelessness. The evaluation also found that CVHP exceeded its target for the number of tenancies provided to offender clients by 80 percent, and had maintained an adequate flow of clients. Overall, program stakeholders were supportive of CVHP, seeing it as providing an effective pathway into high-quality housing that would otherwise have been unavailable to clients, particularly in the case of sex offenders and offenders on parole (Ross et al. 2013). Stakeholders expressed concerns about a lack of clarity around eligibility criteria and the basis for allocating housing to selected clients, while also indicating difficulties with understanding referral and placement processes. While not a view expressed by service providers, both Corrections Victoria and the Department of Health and Human Services expressed reservations about the appropriateness of a criminal justice agency directly funding accommodation services.

In terms of program goals, the 2013 evaluation found that the CVHP has been successful in reducing housing disadvantage for those clients successfully placed in housing, although it noted that this was in the context of a much larger group of offenders who had left prison without receiving CVHP services and who may have experienced homelessness and housing stress (Ross et al. 2013). An analysis of recidivism outcomes based on comparisons between CVHP participants and others who were referred to CVHP but did not receive tenancies through the program indicated that CVHP contributed to reduced recidivism for medium- and high-risk offenders, but not for low-risk offenders (Ross et al. 2013). Survival analysis also indicated that the CVHP group had significantly lower rates of recidivism.

Based on these findings, as well as on a positive cost-benefit analysis, the evaluation concluded that the CVHP has been a successful strategy for addressing housing disadvantage among released prisoners. While recommending some refinements to processes, including feedback to service providers, the evaluators also recommended that the CVHP should be maintained and—if possible—extended, and that protocols should be established for long-term follow-up of CVHP participants to support further cost-benefit analysis.

Despite the effectiveness of the CVHP shown by the evaluation, Corrections Victoria has faced challenges in maintaining this model of service delivery. Information provided by Corrections Victoria for this report suggests that accommodating certain correctional clients, who may present with multiple and complex needs, has created difficulties for other residents and service providers (Corrections Victoria personal communication 27 August 2015). This has led to service providers being reluctant to engage with correctional clients in the provision of housing.

Findings from earlier reviews

In presenting the findings of the current review of the literature, it is useful to briefly outline the findings from the two previous literature reviews to give some background and context to the current findings.

2010 report

The 2010 report drew a number of conclusions in relation to transition and housing support services:

- there was evidence to show that intensive transitional support services had positive impacts on a range of post-release outcomes and that these services have the potential to reduce recidivism—however, the evidence was somewhat mixed;
- no single best-practice model for transitional programs and services was identified;
- good-practice features identified for transitional support services include:
- holistic and individualised approaches focused on prisoner needs;
- multidisciplinary and collaborative service delivery;
- integrated service delivery;
- continuity of support;
- release planning from an early stage;
- long-term post-release support; and
- a case-managed approach.
- good-practice features for housing services include:
- multi-agency and collaborative approaches;
- use of throughcare approaches;
- case-managed service delivery;
- a diversity of accommodation types with varying levels of support; and
- addressing the wider needs of offender clients—including employment, alcohol and other drug use and mental health issues.

2013 report

The 2013 report built on these conclusions and presented key features of effective housing-linked case-managed support services, including:

- individually tailored placement and support services;
- early and ongoing assessment;
- availability of diverse accommodation types with varying types and levels of support;
- holistic or wraparound service approaches to address the totality of individuals' needs;
- emphasis on client empowerment and active engagement in the delivery of services;
- coordinated multi-agency service delivery approaches, with effective partnership arrangements;
- collaboration between criminal justice and community partners;
- flexible and intensive case management;
- small caseloads; and
- identification and allocation of services before exit from prison.

The 2013 report also identified some areas where the literature was inconclusive:

- There was little evidence of the relative advantages of any given housing-linked support models for specific groups—such as women, older people or Indigenous Australians.
- There was mixed evidence on whether there should be role separation in site management and support services.
- There was commentary in the literature suggesting that case management of ex-prisoners should be undertaken by people entirely independent of corrections, but this is not supported by empirical evidence.
- There was no agreement in the literature on the optimum length of time to provide housing-linked support and services.
- The eligibility criteria for different services varied, with little consistency aside from requiring a demonstrated housing need.

The current report

The current literature review has been undertaken in the context of both the CVHP housing support program—currently conducted by Corrections Victoria—and the previous literature reviews. It provides further evidence to clarify those areas where the evidence was previously mixed or inconclusive, to the extent that such new evidence is available.

The report begins with a consideration of the extent of housing need among people leaving prison and returning to the community, looking also at recent evidence for the contribution of housing support to reducing reoffending. The next section of the report examines key models of supported housing, including some emerging approaches to funding social support initiatives. It then covers some of the different approaches to delivering supported housing that have emerged or been discussed in recent years, including approaches to vulnerable groups within the offender population. Finally, there is a discussion of the conclusions of the report and the implications for Corrections Victoria policy and practice.

Housing: need and value

This section presents findings regarding the level and nature of need for post-release housing services. It then considers recent evidence for the role of post-release housing in reducing reoffending and further imprisonment.

Housing need

In 2015 the Victorian Ombudsman reported on an investigation into the rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners in Victoria (Victorian Ombudsman 2015). The report cited evidence that shows around 4,500 sentenced prisoners are released from Victorian prisons each year, along with information given to the inquiry which suggested that most of these ex-prisoners would meet the eligibility criteria for intensive support needs. However, in 2013–14 just under 700 of those prisoners were able to be placed in the Intensive Transitional Support Program (ITSP) (Victorian Ombudsman 2015), a program which includes support in finding stable accommodation. Access to stable accommodation is critical for successful reintegration into the community. Offenders leaving prison are highly vulnerable to not having adequate and stable accommodation: data provided to Corrections Victoria by transitional support service providers indicates that close to a half (44%) of female clients and a quarter (22%) of male clients became homeless when their funded program placement in the ITSP—the average duration of which was not indicated—was completed (see Victorian Ombudsman 2014).

Recent research has indicated high levels of unstable accommodation among those coming into contact with the criminal justice system more generally. Interviews conducted under the Drug Use Monitoring Australia program with a sample of just under 1,000 police detainees showed that nearly a quarter (22%) of these detainees had been living rough or in temporary or unstable accommodation for most of the preceding 30 days (Payne, Macgregor & McDonald 2015). In addition, 12 percent of detainees with permanent accommodation had temporarily lived elsewhere for at least one of the past 30 days. In some cases, detainees living in temporary accommodation had been doing so in positive circumstances, for example, while visiting family or friends. Once these circumstances were controlled for, an estimated 23 percent of the sample (222 detainees) had been homeless or experiencing housing stress in the 30 days prior to being placed in police detention. Across this sub-sample, detainees reported a wide range of reasons behind their housing and homelessness situations. While family and relationship problems were the most commonly reported, followed by

financial problems, eviction, and drug problems, the authors noted that the broad range of responses suggested the need for individualised policy and program responses to homelessness and housing stress among criminal justice populations (Payne, Macgregor & McDonald 2015).

Recent analysis by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (Wood et al. 2015) highlighted the critical role of demographic factors in shaping homelessness. The study found that 42 percent of homeless people across Australia are found in just 10 percent of Australian regions, and that homelessness tends to be concentrated in regions with larger numbers of men, sole parents and Indigenous persons. Higher levels of income inequality and high-density dwellings were also linked with a higher prevalence of homelessness (Wood et al. 2015). The study found that homelessness is not linked to a shortage of affordable housing. Perhaps paradoxically, it reported that areas with a greater supply of affordable housing relative to demand tend to have higher levels of homelessness. Higher rates of homelessness were also found in some areas that had low unemployment rates. The authors suggested that areas with economic disadvantage have more affordable housing, in the form of lower rents, but also have a larger pool of people at risk of homelessness. In these circumstances, it would only take a relatively small proportion of people from that pool becoming homeless to push rates up (Wood et al. 2015). Areas of low unemployment may have small at-risk populations, but the degree of risk is higher because of higher rents. People with low incomes may be priced out of the rental market. These areas may also attract people from other areas who are hoping to find work; if they are not able to find work, they are also not able to afford the higher rents in these areas.

A 2012 study conducted by the Homeless Persons' Legal Service (HPLS) and StreetCare (the HPLS homeless consumer advisory committee) involved consultation with a group of people who had exited prison into housing crisis or homelessness, as well as with service providers who supported those leaving prison in this situation (Schetzer & StreetCare 2013). The study explored the experiences of 26 offenders and the challenges faced by homeless services aiming to meet their needs. Participants were mostly males, aged between 35 and 50 and from the Sydney metropolitan area. Most had histories of income support reliance, mental illness, drug and alcohol misuse, and educational deficits. One third of the participants had experienced primary homelessness on release from prison and all had experienced homelessness in the preceding three months.

Participants in this study identified a range of issues with accessing pre-release services such as housing support, life skills training, education, and prison welfare services (Schetzer & StreetCare 2013). Some of the participants had accessed Community Offender Support Program centres (COSPs) run by New South Wales Corrective Services. COSPs provided transitional accommodation through what is described by NSW Corrective Services as a non-custodial, community-based service providing interim accommodation, assistance with accessing independent housing and access to a range of services. Several participants were critical of COSPs due to the restrictive nature of the environment, which included strict regimes and practices that some saw as overly similar to the prison environment and not conducive to reintegration into the community. These participants also saw COSPs negatively because of the short-term nature of the accommodation provided, which was seen as not leading to long-term

housing, as well as the fact that accommodation was located on prison grounds—and therefore isolated from the general community and facilities—and operated by prison staff (Schetzer & StreetCare 2013). Most of the COSPs were closed in late 2013, following a review which found they had achieved positive outcomes but were expensive, inefficient and poorly located (CSNSW 2013). Participants generally cited a range of difficulties with finding accommodation after release, including: not being able to access accommodation due to lack of available beds (including crisis and temporary accommodation stipulated in parole orders), most accommodation options only being temporary in nature, lack of access to social housing and being unable to afford private rental accommodation. These difficulties compounded a range of other issues confronting those returning to the community, such as avoiding negative influences, resisting temptations to reoffend, and a lack of independent living skills.

In relation to housing issues, findings from the Schetzer and StreetCare (2013) study noted the importance of pre-release planning and case-managed throughcare. Their consultations suggested the need for greater resources in the form of community-managed transitional accommodation, crisis accommodation, affordable accommodation and social housing. Participants noted that temporary and crisis accommodation services were an important part of the post-release environment, with related services such as medical and counselling services viewed positively. Transitional accommodation services such as those provided through the Community Restorative Centre, a non-government service provider that helps released prisoners return to the community, were also cited as helpful. However, both participants and service providers noted the difficulties sometimes experienced in accessing these centres due to limited resources (Schetzer & StreetCare 2013).

Housing value

Access to suitable and stable housing has long been recognised as an important component of successful prisoner re-entry strategies. If housing support programs are able to contribute to reduced reoffending and imprisonment, there is the potential for substantial cost savings to be realised. An analysis undertaken by the UK Fry Housing Trust, taking a person convicted of committing grievous bodily harm as a case study, found the cost of providing housing support for six months was £6,179, compared with £143,778 for each offence of the type committed by the offender in the case study (Donath 2013). Put another way, the cost of imprisoning this offender was estimated to be 23 times the cost of providing housing support.

In recent years a number of studies have been undertaken to examine support for the hypothesis that stable housing has a direct role in reducing recidivism. A longitudinal study of more than 1,400 adults sentenced to imprisonment in the UK found that 15 percent of prisoners in the sample reported being homeless before entering custody, compared with three and a half percent of the general population who report ever having been homeless (Williams, Poyser & Hopkins 2012). More than a third (37%) of prisoners stated they would need help with finding accommodation when released, and 84 percent indicated they would need a lot of help. Those who reported they would need help finding somewhere to live were

more likely to have served a previous prison or community-based sentence than those who did not need help, and prisoners with prior sentences were more likely to have been homeless before being incarcerated. Needing greater help to find accommodation was also associated with having a drug and/or alcohol misuse problem (Williams, Poyser & Hopkins 2012).

Importantly, the study showed a clear association between prior homelessness and recidivism. More than three quarters (79%) of prisoners who had been homeless before incarceration were reconvicted within 12 months of release, compared with just under a half (47%) of those who were not homeless (Williams, Poyser & Hopkins 2012). Prisoners who indicated they would need help with finding accommodation when released were more likely (65%) than those not needing this help (45%) to be reconvicted in the first year after release. Those who had shorter-term housing—a lease of less than a year—before imprisonment were more likely (52%) to be reconvicted in the first year than those who had been in their accommodation for more than a year (43%).

O’Leary’s review of available literature on the role of stable accommodation in reducing recidivism found that the evidence was unclear (O’Leary 2013). The author found that the evidence tends to be of one of two types. Some of the reviewed studies used robust methods, but did not isolate the effects of stable accommodation from other factors that may have contributed to recidivism outcomes. Other studies did focus on accommodation, but used a weaker methodology which made their findings less reliable. In conclusion, O’Leary determined that providing or supporting offenders to achieve stable accommodation potentially has a role in programs aimed at reducing recidivism. However, the nature of that role, the causal mechanisms that link accommodation and recidivism, and the most effective methods for increasing housing stability were not clear, based on the available evidence.

Another recent study involved a comprehensive analysis published between 2000 and 2010 of 35 evaluations of community-based prisoner re-entry programs (Wright et al. 2013). The analysis included a total of 29 different programs, with some programs evaluated more than once. It is telling to note that the authors expressed surprise at the small number of evaluations in the literature, given the scale of the issues involved with prisoner re-entry. Of the 29 re-entry programs evaluated, the most common were those which provided life skills and treatment for substance abuse. Programs that included aftercare and housing support were the most likely to produce positive outcomes. While no program features were found to be particularly ineffective, the combination of housing components and aftercare support seemed to have the most positive effects in terms of supporting successful reintegration into the community after imprisonment (Wright et al. 2013).

Recent British initiatives to address high rates of reoffending, including through measures to address housing need, have met with limited success. The Diamond Initiative was a two-year £12 million integrated offender management scheme. It involved a multi-agency approach to the reintegration of short-term prisoners serving periods of less than 12 months in custody. The Diamond Initiative gained prominence in the literature as the primary aim of the British justice reinvestment strategy. Despite the scale of investment in the Initiative and the level of support it received from stakeholder agencies, the Diamond Initiative produced no impacts on re-offending for the intervention group, compared with a control group (Ellison et al. 2013).

The focus of the Ellison paper was an evaluation of Vision Housing, set up in 2007 as a London-based housing charity and social enterprise. The program was established by exoffenders and engages ex-offenders as staff and volunteers. Together with the involvement of exoffenders in its establishment and operations, the evaluation of Vision Housing identified its ability to provide good-quality accommodation on the day of release, geographically away from the client's area of offending, as the key feature separating Vision Housing from the Diamond Initiative and other programs (Ellison et al. 2013).

Consistent with the findings and observations of other authors, Ellison et al. noted the limited literature on links between housing and re-offending. They noted there was even less literature focused on the impacts of specific housing initiatives (2013). Most studies have come from the US and have involved rehabilitation or re-entry programs that include housing as part of a broader program of assistance.

Referrals to Vision Housing come from local authorities, the prison service, probation trusts, and third sector organisations, as well as some self-referrals. The program is available to males and females. It supports those leaving custody as well as those who are serving or have completed community corrections orders. Its clients are typically persistent, prolific adult offenders, but it excludes convicted arsonists and, for the most part, violent and sex offenders who are subject to multi-agency public protection arrangements.

Reoffending was measured in the evaluation by comparing the proven reoffending of clients in the Vision Housing cohort with their estimated likelihood of reoffending. The predicted reoffending rates were based on proven reoffending among a statistically matched cohort of offenders. The use of reoffending estimates—rather than actual reoffending—by a matched sample was acknowledged by the authors as a limitation of the study (Ellison et al. 2013). Within that limitation, the evaluation findings were highly positive. Analysis showed a 9.1 percent reduction in proven reoffending by the Vision Housing cohort, compared with the estimated likelihood. Provision of accommodation appeared to be particularly important for female offenders, who showed a 26.4 percent reduction in reoffending compared with the estimate, versus 6.3 percent for male clients (Ellison et al. 2013). Reductions in reoffending were also strongly linked to age. Clients under the age of 35 experienced a 16 percent reduction in reoffending, while no reduction was observed for those in older age groups. Reductions were associated with the types of offences previously committed by clients. The authors assigned a measure of seriousness to each offence category. Reductions in reoffending were highest for those in the most serious offence categories, with a 20.9 percent reduction in reoffending for those in the upper (most serious) 50 percent of categories (Ellison et al. 2013).

Other studies have also indicated that offenders who are assessed as presenting a high risk of reoffending stand to benefit from the provision of supportive housing. Another London-based program was examined in a separate study (Bruce et al. 2014). This pilot program operating in South London provided services to men with a personality disorder returning to the community following imprisonment for a serious offence. Each of the clients had been assessed as high-risk. Services were individualised and could include combinations of supported housing and

treatment. The study found that client reconviction rates were nearly four times lower for those who received supported housing and treatment than for those receiving treatment only (Bruce et al. 2014).

High-risk offenders were also the recipients of services through Washington State's Reentry Housing Pilot Program (RHPP), which was the subject of a multi-site outcome evaluation (Lutze, Rosky & Hamilton 2013). This was a longitudinal study of all program participants who accessed the program during the period from 2008 to 2011.

The Washington State program arose from concerns about fiscal crises impacting corrections and social services. This led to calls to move beyond coercive responses to offending—such as imprisonment and mandated orders—to coordinated responses, including the provision of social services, treatment, and community support for offenders returning to the community from incarceration (Lutze, Rosky & Hamilton 2013). The RHPP was based on observations of high rates of failure and return to custody in the first three to six months after release (see Hamilton & Campbell 2013; Petersilia 2003). The program led to recognition of the importance of establishing residential stability in the period immediately following release. At the same time, the authors of the RHPP evaluation cited the limited and mixed evidence on the impact of housing on reoffending, although they cited an earlier study showing that housing combined with other services for high-risk offenders led to a statistically significant 12 percent reduction in recidivism (Miller and Ngugi 2009).

The RHPP provides a housing-centred intervention that includes wraparound services targeted to the high-risk and high-needs offenders in its target group. Lutze, Rosky and Hamilton (2013) examined the effects of the program on recidivism for a period of up to three years after release from incarceration. They also examined and measured experiences of homelessness over time for the treatment and comparison groups, to control for the effects of residential instability on outcomes.

The evaluation concluded that the intended outcome—reducing recidivism by providing housing to high-risk offenders who would have otherwise have been released into homelessness—had been achieved (Lutze, Rosky & Hamilton 2013). Stable accommodation emerged as a very important factor in reducing recidivism. Periods of homelessness over time significantly elevated the risk of recidivism, with those in stable accommodation having lower rates of recidivism than those experiencing periods of homelessness. Those in the RHPP treatment group experienced significantly lower rates of new convictions and readmissions to custody. Using survival analysis, the authors showed that the time to parole revocation for participants was significantly greater for the RHPP treatment group than for the control group. However, there was no difference between the groups in the number of offenders whose parole was revoked. Across both the stable housing and homelessness groups, the groups with the greatest risk of failure (through reoffending or revocation) were men and young people; women and older individuals were at lower risk of failure (Lutze, Rosky & Hamilton 2013).

The authors of the RHPP evaluation acknowledged that the rigorous requirements for participation may have led to increased motivation to succeed among those in the treatment group. They limited the potential for this by accounting for individual motivation for change as part of the propensity score matching process (Lutze, Rosky & Hamilton 2013).

In conclusion, the authors of the Washington State RHPP evaluation recommended that subsidised housing for high-risk offenders should be a central element of all responses to managing offender re-entry to the community after incarceration. They suggested that policymakers need to move beyond seeing residential status as a fixed event; rather they propose that policymakers should see it as:

“

a fluid and volatile state of being for offenders that is an ongoing threat to successful re-entry and long-term reintegration (Lutze, Rosky & Hamilton 2013: 483).

Community support

Despite both the demonstrated need for housing support for released prisoners, and the value of that support in terms of reducing offending and the costs of imprisonment, there may remain general opposition from the public to the accommodation of prisoners in their neighbourhoods.

A study conducted in the US gauged public support for a range of initiatives, including public support for housing programs (Garland, Wodahl & Schuhmann 2013). Using a survey methodology, the researchers found overall in-principle support for assisting offenders in securing housing on their release. A small majority (58%) agreed that helping ex-prisoners find somewhere to stay after release should be a high priority for the state, while 42 percent disagreed. Just over a quarter (26%) of respondents agreed that people who have been in prison multiple times are as deserving of housing support as those who are coming out for the first time, while nearly three quarters of respondents (74%) disagreed with this proposition. The belief that those who have committed offences should be given lower priority for housing support was reflected in three quarters (75%) of respondents agreeing that, during a housing crisis, people who have never been in prison should receive housing support over those who have.

The survey used for this study also gathered some more nuanced information about levels of support for a range of initiatives, including transitional housing centres. Respondents were asked whether they supported having transitional housing programs in their city, and then whether they supported having them in their neighbourhood (Garland, Wodahl & Schuhmann 2013). Half of the respondents (50%) generally or overall supported transitional housing centres in their city. However, support fell to a quarter (25%) for transitional housing in their own neighbourhood. When asked about transitional housing specifically for drug offenders, a third (34%) supported having the housing in their city, but only 18 percent supported transitional housing for drug offenders in their own neighbourhood. These figures fell further in relation to violent offenders, with only 24 percent of respondents supporting transitional housing for violent offenders in their city and only 10 percent supporting it in their neighbourhood. Only 22 percent of respondents supported transitional housing for sex offenders in their city (Garland, Wodahl & Schuhmann 2013). The authors did not report the percent that supported transitional housing for sex offenders in their neighbourhood, but this could be assumed to be very low.

Looking at the full range of initiatives, the study found overall support for prisoner re-entry initiatives (Garland, Wodahl & Schuhmann 2013). Large majorities of respondents agreed that helping prisoners adjust to society is a good idea; that communities should provide programs and services to ex-prisoners; and that released prisoners would benefit from well-run services and programs in the community. There was also strong support for helping prisoners with employment which meant they earned enough money to get by, but not for assistance that led to them earning as much as the average middle-class citizen.

Conversely, the study found little public support for higher taxes to fund re-entry initiatives, or for the notion that those who had been in prison multiple times were as deserving of employment as those leaving prison for the first time (Garland, Wodahl & Schuhmann 2013). Despite the demonstrated importance of housing for the effective reintegration of offenders, support for housing was considered by respondents to be less important than job training (supply- and demand-side employment assistance), drug treatment, mental health, health care or voucher programs.

Service delivery and financial models

The literature suggests clear acceptance that housing support should be an element in strategies to support the re-entry and reintegration into the community of people leaving prison. There is also evidence supporting the inclusion of programs to support offenders on community-based orders who do not have stable accommodation, as well as for people whose lack of stable accommodation is contributing to an elevated risk of involvement with the criminal justice system. While there remains limited evidence of the nature and scale of the impacts of housing support on reoffending, the literature suggests an accepted role for housing support in offender re-entry programs.

With the importance of housing support being more or less accepted within correctional programming, recent developments in housing support for offenders have tended to focus on different models of assistance and on the financial basis for providing that assistance. These developments have been—at least partly—driven by a tightening fiscal environment, which has created a demand to contain or reduce expenditure on corrections. Another product of this environment is the concept of justice reinvestment, which both complements and contributes to the development of new models for providing housing support.

Service delivery models

In recent years a number of distinct models of housing support have emerged. While these have most commonly been discussed in relation to mental health clients, an understanding of the different models is relevant to a range of client groups, including offenders. This is particularly so given the intersections that can exist, with clients sometimes falling into a number of groups.

In an examination of the impacts of supported housing in a small community in Canada, Leviten-Reid, Johnson and Miller (2014) outlined the three dominant models of housing support for mental health clients:

- *Custodial* housing is tied directly to treatment. Clients have no control or choice over their living environments or the type and extent of care they receive.
- *Supportive* housing is focused on rehabilitation. Housing is provided within a continuum as individuals transition from residences providing high levels of supervision to those providing less supervision.
- *Supported* housing is a more recent development and is focused on recovery. It is based around a model where clients live independently, accessing a range of flexible and individualised support services. Clients are assisted to secure housing options that are affordable and integrated into general community settings.

These models are not mutually exclusive, and some programs will provide a blend of supportive and supported housing (Leviten-Reid, Johnson & Miller 2014).

Supportive housing

While the principles applied in supportive housing may ostensibly have some application in correctional settings, Parsell and Moutou (2014) place its application firmly in the domain of psychiatric populations. They note that in North America, where a large majority of the literature originates, supportive housing is clearly located in mental health contexts and often discussed as a response for people with severe mental illnesses. The distinctions between models of housing, particularly between supported and supportive housing, become blurred in the literature. While the literature establishes these as two different models, the terms are often used interchangeably (Parsell & Moutou 2014), although a number of authors have sought to provide distinct definitions. For example, Parkinson, Nelson and Horgan (1999) saw supportive housing as focused on rehabilitation and identity as a resident, and supported housing as emphasising empowerment, integration and identity as a citizen. Supported housing is seen as strengths-focused, with choice an important component of the approach and with the role of the landlord separated from that of the service provider (Kirsh et al. 2009).

A recent Australian study by University of Queensland researchers examined different models of supportive housing and evaluated their effectiveness (Parsell & Moutou 2014). The study focused on two models, considered by the authors to be the two dominant forms of supportive housing in place throughout Australia:

- the Common Ground supportive housing model—based on congregated housing, with both onsite support and links to other necessary social services; and
- scattered-site supportive housing models—involving geographically dispersed accommodation, with clients receiving outreach support provided by an organisation that is a partner in the model.

There is no consensus in the literature about whether scattered or congregated models—of which there are several—are more effective (Busch-Geertsema 2013).

The predominant form of supportive housing for homeless people in Europe at the current time is scattered-site housing. These approaches are person-centred rather than place-centred (Busch-Geertsema 2013). Busch-Geertsema argues that scattered-site approaches lead to normalisation, where supportive housing becomes an accepted and integrated part of the community, instead of being marginalised and stigmatised.

The Common Ground model originated in New York, where it has recently been renamed Breaking Ground, and provides permanent supportive housing (Breaking Ground 2016). The model brings together business, government and notforprofit organisations to deliver permanent housing solutions to end homelessness. The approach emphasises social inclusion and integrates housing and support services. Common Ground provides independent housing for formerly homeless people, as well as offering housing for low-income workers. Common Ground developments have been either purpose-built or implemented through redevelopment of existing properties. While differences in justice systems, government service arrangements and housing markets may mean the findings are not directly applicable to the Australian context, US research has shown that Common Ground housing can be delivered for one quarter to one fifth of the cost of imprisonment (Mercy Foundation nd).

In Australia, the Common Ground model has been implemented in most capital cities through non-government service providers including:

- HomeGround (Victoria);
- Mercy Foundation (New South Wales);
- Common Ground Adelaide (South Australia);
- Micah Projects (Queensland); and
- Common Ground Tasmania.

Common Ground initiatives are also under development in the Australian Capital Territory and Western Australia. In Australia, Common Ground targets vulnerable and chronically homeless people who have been homeless continuously for six months or more, or who have experienced multiple episodes of homelessness over a 12-month period (Common Ground Adelaide 2017; Common Ground Canberra nd; Common Ground Queensland 2014; Mercy Foundation nd). Tenants pay a maximum of 30 percent of their income in rent and have a tenancy arrangement with the same rights and responsibilities as a standard tenancy agreement, but without time limits on the tenancy. Common Ground buildings accommodate formerly homeless people together with low income tenants including students. Tenancy management services are delivered separately from support services and by different organisations (Common Ground Adelaide 2017; Common Ground Canberra nd; Common Ground Queensland 2014; Mercy Foundation nd).

Whichever model is used, supportive housing is seen as an ongoing and coordinated solution. It is what Parsell and Moutou see as the ‘antithesis of Australia’s former homelessness crisis system’ (Parsell & Moutou 2014: 1). They contended that earlier approaches were not intended to provide permanent housing and lacked the resources either to provide this or to respond to complex needs. A later conceptualisation of supportive housing by Parsell and others, applied to an evaluation of supportive housing models, defined supportive housing as:

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any package of assistance that aims to assist tenants with a broad range of health and other aspects of their lives including access to and sustaining of affordable tenancies. Affordable tenancies can be in social housing or the private rental sector, although in the contemporary Australian context most approaches to supportive housing rely on social housing. This definition includes supportive housing in either scattered-site housing with outreach support or single-site housing with onsite support (Parsell et al. 2015: 5).

Parsell et al. (2015) note that the level of support provided can vary across a wide spectrum, but the level and intensity can be voluntarily determined by the tenant. While tenancy and service provision are integrated into a model of supportive housing, access to housing is not conditional on receiving support or complying with support provider requirements. While these definitions and principles may appear to reflect a settled position on the conceptualisation of supportive housing, most of the existing literature stems from research conducted in the US and, to a lesser extent, the UK (Parsell et al. 2015) and it is arguably less applicable to the Australian context.

For their study, Parsell et al. (2015) conducted a quantitative survey of tenants living in scattered-site and single-site supportive housing, receiving 102 responses. They also conducted 28 interviews with tenants and 22 interviews with tenancy and support providers; each of the interviews concentrated on the model of single-site supportive housing with onsite support. Among the key findings of the research, the authors identified that single-site supportive housing was suited to tenants with life experiences which made them highly vulnerable, such as trauma and dysfunctional families. Supportive housing provided opportunities not just to make the transition from homelessness into housing but also to establish the skills, attitudes and behaviours required for people to be good, reliable and pro-social tenants. Rather than seeing support in terms of service providers acting on their behalf, informants saw support as providing tenants with the skills and opportunities to take greater control of their own lives. In this way, informants saw supportive housing as an active process for tenants who, in turn, contributed to shaping their environment. Importantly, tenants saw themselves making positive life changes and attributed these changes to supportive housing.

From a policy perspective, the findings of this research suggest that supportive housing provides an environment in which tenants can feel physically and emotionally safe, in ways they do not necessarily experience in other forms of housing, such as boarding houses and unsupported social housing (Parsell et al. 2015). Supportive housing gives people who are

experiencing chronic homelessness and have high-level support needs immediate access to stable housing that they are able to feel confident in maintaining. This housing can be achieved without the need for preparatory interventions or transitional periods. Parsell et al. suggest that the positive elements of supportive housing can be achieved through either single-site or scattered-site models, providing that the arrangements recognise the centrality of the tenants and their decisions in shaping the environments in which they live. From this perspective, supportive housing creates potential for a range of markedly or subtly different models to be effective; however, it is also problematic from the perspective of identifying best-practice models and principles. Parsell et al. note the many slightly different forms of supportive housing that have emerged, and hence the challenge of identifying the elements that make supportive housing effective.

Supported housing

Supported housing is claimed to give residents greater feelings of control and stability than other forms of housing (Leviton-Reid, Johnson & Miller 2014), at least for mental health clients. Supported housing has been demonstrated to contribute to less unlawful behaviour by residents, compared with other housing models (Bean, Shafer & Glennon 2013). From the limited evidence that is available, supported housing in rural and suburban areas is associated with improved housing stability and greater feelings of positivity (Leviton-Reid, Johnson & Miller 2014). However, the literature indicates mixed findings with regard to feelings of isolation and integration, and the impacts on mental health.

Leviton-Reid, Johnson and Miller's (2014) study focused on mental health housing in a small rural community in the Canadian province of Nova Scotia. The authors noted some of the challenges for implementing treatment and support services in smaller community areas, particularly the difficulties recruiting and maintaining staff, travel time for staff living in larger centres and limited housing stock. Interviews with clients conducted for the study showed a range of positive outcomes compared with their experiences before entering supported housing:

- security—clients felt a greater sense of physical and financial security living in supported housing than in other housing arrangements;
- social inclusion—compared with custodial or supportive housing, clients in supported housing felt more socially included and a greater sense of 'normalcy';
- stability and control—clients in supported housing indicated feeling more stable and more in control of their lives than clients in other forms of housing;
- recovery—clients in supported housing felt they had greater capacity to focus on their recovery while living in stable and controlled environments; and
- well-being—living in supported housing was associated with improvements in feelings of independence, happiness, self-worth and self-confidence (Leviton-Reid, Johnson & Miller 2014).

A set of criteria integral to supported housing was identified through a systematic analysis of 38 studies on both supportive and supported housing published between 1987 and 2008 (Tabol et al. 2010). These studies involved interventions for people experiencing homelessness with mental illness and/or substance use disorders. All but one of the studies was undertaken in North America. This analysis identified five criteria for supported housing:

- standard or normal housing within the general community, underpinned by normal tenancy arrangements and with the intention of the housing being long-term;
- flexible supports, aiming to meet individual needs through accessible services in close proximity to the residence;
- tenancy is separate from support services and occupation of the housing is not conditional on the use of services;
- choice, with the resident able to exercise choice about the various housing options that might be available to them and able to share in decision-making about aspects of their housing and the services they access; and
- immediate placement into housing, without a requirement to transition through preparatory circumstances.

Despite the attempts to define supportive and supported housing separately, the terms continue to be used interchangeably in the literature (see Parsell & Moutou 2014). In practice, these two housing models sit along a continuum, where their application in practice does not always neatly align with carefully drawn definitions. The degree of choice available to the individual and the separation of services from housing arrangements can vary between individuals and over time as a function of a range of variable conditions. These might include: the availability of housing types and services, the amount of time the individual has been in normalised housing, any legal orders the individual is bound to comply with, case-management decisions made by service providers or authorities, and the extent of the individual's progress with addressing issues that have contributed to their situation and behaviours.

While developed in the context of North American psychiatric populations, these housing models can be adapted to other populations and environments. In the US state of Ohio, supportive housing is being used to relieve costs to the prison system by providing accommodation and assistance for high-needs offenders leaving prison, through pre-release planning and post-release housing. The Returning Home Ohio (RHO) pilot initiative, jointly developed by the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections and the Corporation for Supportive Housing, targets people with disabilities leaving prison who have histories of chronic homelessness or who are at risk of being homeless on release (De Santis 2012; Fontaine 2014). The initiative was established in 2004 out of recognition that halfway houses and transitional housing were not meeting the needs of offenders who required longer term housing with wraparound services. Establishment of the program relied to a large extent on commitment from state leadership, coordination across state agencies, and the involvement of specialist community-based organisations providing services to target issues such as mental health, developmental disabilities and drug addiction (De Santis 2012).

RHO gives priority to ex-prisoners with severe mental illness, developmental disabilities or other needs that require long-term support. The program operates across several cities in Ohio. The supportive housing providers vary across cities, with some working primarily with transient populations and others catering more specifically for clients with backgrounds of severe mental illness and trauma (Fontaine 2014). Housing models also vary, with some service providers using scattered-site housing involving private landlords, and others directly managing properties that house both correctional and noncorrectional clients. A diverse group of service providers was intentionally selected to align with the diversity of needs among the client population (Fontaine 2014).

RHO was evaluated by the Urban Institute in 2012 (Fontaine et al. 2012). The evaluation concluded that the RHO initiative had a positive impact on participants, which was linked to the combination of stable housing and the provision of services including mental health treatment and drug and alcohol counselling (Fontaine et al. 2012). The evaluation compared outcomes between released prisoners receiving supportive housing through RHO and a comparison group of released prisoners who were eligible for the initiative but did not receive services. Participants were 40 percent less likely to be rearrested than subjects in the comparison group, but this was mostly in relation to minor offences. Participants were also 61 percent less likely to be reincarcerated than those in the comparison group, and time spent in the community before rearrest was significantly longer for the treatment participation group. However, when RHO participants were rearrested, they were likely to experience significantly more rearrests than the comparison group. The reductions in recidivism observed among the participant group came at a cost, with the additional cost of services provided through RHO exceeding the savings realised through reduced imprisonment (Fontaine et al. 2012). The evaluation also showed that recidivism outcomes were poorer for those with a personality disorder or substance abuse/mental health comorbidity diagnosis (Fontaine 2014). The evaluators were unable to determine whether this was due to workers not having sufficient experience in working with these clients or to the fact that clients with these histories are particularly difficult to provide with services and housing. The evaluators noted that:

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the combination of certain mental health diagnoses with recent criminal justice contact may be indicative of a particularly high risk population (Fontaine 2014: 72).

The evaluation suggested that Returning Home Ohio demonstrated the capacity for a correctional agency and community-based service providers to work together effectively, and that recruiting experienced service providers and training them to work with released offenders and correctional institutions was crucial to the program's success (Fontaine 2014). The pre-release engagement and planning was facilitated by giving housing providers information about prisoners and how to engage directly with them. Outcomes from the pilot studies have seen Returning Home Ohio continued and expanded.

The growth of supportive housing models in Australia reflects the policy position seen in the US, where such programs have emerged partly in response to a lack of funding for additional crisis accommodation. In both countries, supportive housing is embedded within frameworks targeting those deemed most vulnerable, and aims to achieve permanent housing and support solutions. Models of supportive housing have therefore emerged from differing policy perspectives—one a normative approach about equity and targeting those most in need (Parsell et al. 2013), and the other linked to cost-effectiveness (Johnson, Parkinson & Parsell 2012). In Australia, supportive housing is also part of a national agenda to achieve coordination between government and community responses to homelessness. Phillips (2013) has shown complete consensus among Australian policymakers about the importance of service integration and collaboration between homelessness services and mainstream institutions.

While the evidence for supportive housing is overwhelmingly positive, there are criticisms as well. Again these arose in the context of predominantly North American psychiatric populations. Nonetheless, as with the principles and the housing models, it is worth considering the context in which they could help inform consideration of housing for Australian correctional populations. Due to the interchangeability in the literature around terminology, these criticisms can be taken as also applying to supported housing.

The main criticism of supportive housing has been that there is little evidence of further life improvements among those exiting homelessness to housing (Parsell & Moutou 2014). Evaluations of supportive housing have not shown evidence that attributes such as recidivism, social integration, social participation, alcohol and other drug use, poverty, stigma, unemployment or mental health deficits have been positively affected through engagement with supportive housing. While supportive housing appears to deliver improvements in stability of accommodation and measures of financial security, it does not appear in itself to provide a platform for achieving further improvements in long-term outcomes. One reason for this may be that people who are eligible for supportive housing carry vulnerabilities and disadvantages that are too difficult to overcome. Parsell and Moutou (2014) have raised related questions about what supportive housing can reasonably be expected to achieve. Targeting those people assessed as being at the highest risk may tend to mean that the chances of them achieving further positive outcomes are reduced, compared with those in lesser need.

Financial models

The challenges of funding social support initiatives in environments of fiscal constraint have led to the development of a range of social impact investment strategies, such as social impact bonds and social benefit bonds. Social impact investment aims to bring together capital and expertise from various sectors to help address social challenges (Office of Social Impact Investment NSW 2015). This form of social investment typically involves private and charitable organisations investing in bonds that are linked to social improvement initiatives. Profits are made on the bonds when the social impact or benefit outcomes result in the government's costs for those social services being reduced.

Social impact investments have been adopted in the US, the UK and more recently in Australia, and are often associated with the implementation of justice reinvestment strategies. Justice reinvestment aims to reduce prison populations and stem prison growth through investment in strategies to prevent offending and breaches of conditional release orders. One of the principles of justice reinvestment is that savings made through reduced imprisonment can be used to fund social reform interventions. Social impact investment provides a way of making funds available to develop and implement those interventions in the first instance. Consequent savings can then be reinvested. In this way, social impact investment saves governments from having to make the initial funding available.

Social impact bonds were first used in criminal justice contexts in the UK to finance a prisoner rehabilitation program operating from Peterborough Prison (Ganguly 2014). The use of social impact bonds for this program has been reported to have enabled innovation, flexibility and a focus on outcomes, and to have brought a greater degree of rigour to efforts to prevent reoffending. The program has also been credited with improving outcomes for offenders on short sentences and with leading to the establishment of a range of other bonds (Eccles 2014). The bonds have operated through a fund created to give private bodies—such as charitable trusts—the capacity to profit from investments by achieving better outcomes—such as lower recidivism rates—than government-run offender programs (Hudson 2013).

The first social impact bond to be issued in the US for any purpose was issued by Goldman Sachs Bank, in the form of a US\$9.6 million loan to support therapeutic programs for young offenders being held on Rikers Island in New York (Olson & Phillips 2013). Loan repayments were tied to actual and projected cost savings to the New York City Department of Corrections resulting from decreases in recidivism. As the financial outcomes of the loan were linked to successful social outcomes, Goldman Sachs acknowledged that a robust process and an impact evaluation of the intervention were essential components of due diligence (Olson & Phillips 2013). Initial results from the Rikers Island social impact bond did not show a sufficient return on investment and the intervention was scheduled to end in August 2015 (Roman 2015).

The Rikers Island project has not necessarily represented a failure for social investment. While it has not achieved a reduction in recidivism, its outcomes did not result in ongoing government expenditure, as would have been likely under prevailing procurement arrangements (Roman 2015). New York City officials have identified the social impact bond arrangement as a success, as it did not incur financial impacts for the City yet introduced greater rigour into its processes (Burton 2015). The process of establishing the bond necessarily required the New York City government to approach its program management in a more rigorous and outcomes-focused way than it had previously, resulting in processes and mechanisms that can help to ensure greater accountability for future interventions. The robust evaluation demanded by the social impact bond approach can in itself be considered a positive step towards more effective programming, and a valuable contribution to the evidence base (Roman 2015).

New South Wales was the first Australian jurisdiction to trial social benefit bonds, introducing two bonds in 2013 related to services for children in foster care. The first return on the initial bond, issued in August 2014, resulted in a 7.5 percent return for investors (Eyers 2014). In its

Social Impact Investment Policy, announced in February 2015, the NSW Government has identified a number of priority areas for further use of social benefit bonds, including supporting offenders on parole to reduce reoffending (Office of Social Impact Investment NSW 2015). Measures of success for this investment would include reduced reoffending rates, increased time to reoffending, and reduced severity of offences. Other priority areas for the NSW Government include managing chronic health conditions, mental health hospitalisation and addressing homelessness among young people.

Very similar in concept to social impact bonds, the introduction of Payment by Results (PbR) in the United Kingdom has been heralded as a major reform. It is seen as providing substance to the concept of justice reinvestment by channelling investments into programs to prevent offending—rather than using mechanisms to manage the consequences of offending (Homel 2014). PbR approaches are seen as a way of increasing standards while reducing costs. A number of housing-related TSOs (third sector organisations) in the UK have been involved with PbR arrangements which support accommodation for short-term prisoners (Mills et al. 2013).

The effectiveness of PbR is largely unproven at this time, and it has been suggested that such approaches may be little more than a twist on previously failed attempts to introduce contestability or competition into the criminal justice system (Calder & Goodman 2013). It has also been suggested that PbR has the potential to force innovative organisations out of the marketplace in favour of multinational corporations (Calder & Goodman 2013). Such corporations are able to leverage against their large resource and asset bases, using more traditional approaches, which may produce lower rates of return on investments but also carry lower levels of risk. Some prison staff involved with housing-related services have suggested that PbR approaches could lead to ‘quick fix’ housing solutions, with no follow-up or ongoing support provided for offenders accommodated in this way (Mills et al. 2013).

Social impact investment has the potential to contribute to the ongoing development of supported housing for correctional clients, and could be linked to a justice reinvestment approach, as they share a degree of resonance. Both social impact investment and justice reinvestment involve financial incentives to improve social justice and community wellbeing outcomes through improved interventions and services. Within a justice reinvestment framework, bonds could potentially provide a source of funds for an initial investment in offending-related interventions—such as post-release housing—or they could be used to supplement realised savings from justice reinvestment strategies.

Social impact bonds and PbR programs have been criticised for transferring from government to private investors the risk of scaling up crime prevention and offender rehabilitation interventions, when the government has not previously invested in producing the evidence to support large-scale delivery of these interventions (Homel 2014). Perhaps a more fundamental issue with social impact bonds and PbR is that they tend to be focused on redesign of the criminal justice system, rather than on broader social justice reform which could address community-level needs and the underlying factors that contribute to crime at the social and community level (Homel 2014).

It should be recognised that social impact investment is an emerging field: these criticisms may become less relevant as the policy frameworks for social impact investment develop more fully. To date, social impact investment has been used in relation to those who are in highest need and who experience frequent and involuntary interaction with justice and care systems. If social impact investment proves successful, it is likely that it will be applied to broader areas of social need and to addressing some of the underlying factors cited by Homel (2014).

Another approach to providing housing support in a constrained fiscal environment is through the use of private rental properties. It has been observed that in the last two decades social housing has become more focused on those with the highest levels of need, making low-rent private tenancies more important for households with lower incomes (Tually et al. 2015). A range of tenancy assistance models have emerged, including private rental brokerage programs.

By its nature, private tenancy is precarious and prone to instability. Research shows increased risks of tenancy failure for vulnerable groups such as Indigenous Australians, women escaping domestic violence, recent humanitarian arrivals, people living with a disability, young people and older people (Tually et al. 2015). While not referred to in the literature, corrections clients would also fall within the vulnerable groups who face heightened risks of private tenancy failure.

Private rental brokerage has been defined as helping:

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...vulnerable households to access and sustain private rental tenancies. It does this through targeted early intervention assistance designed to build tenancy capacity and through building links with the local private rental industry (Tually et al. 2016: 1).

In some jurisdictions, private rental brokerage is delivered through formal programs. In others, it is one activity within an agency's broader housing support functions (Tually et al. 2016). Programs work with clients to help them strengthen their capacity to access the often highly competitive private rental market. While there are initial indications that they can be effective, these programs have not yet been subject to thorough evaluation, nor has there been any measuring of outcomes for clients or for the programs (Tually et al. 2016).

Moving on

An important consideration when providing any form of supported housing is planning for clients to exit from that housing when the time is right. Moving on frees up limited resources to meet continuing demand and, in the correctional setting, allows for a more complete reintegration of offenders into the community. The duration of support required by offenders will vary with different models of service provision and different levels of individual need. Exiting supported housing will not be a viable goal for all individuals. For example, some people with a severe psychiatric illness will require support throughout their lives. Some models of supported or supportive housing thus must include provision for clients to remain with the service, either permanently or indefinitely.

For most criminal justice clients, a goal of support is to exit supported housing into independent housing—whether public or private—or into other service and support arrangements. This goal will be identified in individual case plans. For planned support generally, the Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS) suggests talking with offender clients at each review meeting about the aim of independence, once goals related to accommodation stability have been achieved. QCOSS also advises that exit planning should involve discussing what kind of support the client will need on leaving the service, which service will provide this, and how the client can access it (QCOSS nd).

There is little information available to show the pathways from supported or transitional housing for ex-prisoners and other clients. A review of the HomeGround Transitional Housing Management Program in Victoria suggested advocating for affordable long-term housing for all members of the community as an important future direction for transitional housing providers (Thomson Goodall Associates 2009). An examination of the impacts of transitional housing on homelessness in the USA found that most families who exited from transitional housing into stable housing under tenancy arrangements were still in stable housing situations at the time of a follow-up 12 months later (Burt 2010). The study showed that 86 percent of the 179 families studied had exited from transitional housing to their own independent homes, with only four families becoming homeless during that year. Family units also remained stable over the 12 months following their exit from transitional housing, with 86 percent of family groups maintaining the same family membership at the 12-month followup as at the time of exiting the program. While not directly relevant to supported housing outcomes for offenders, these findings give some indication of the importance of planning exits from supported housing to stable long-term options.

Increasing housing supply

The availability of suitable housing is a critical element of successful reintegration of prisoners into the community. Providing housing support is dependent on enough affordable housing being available to meet overall and individual household levels of need. Services in all jurisdictions face challenges in securing accommodation for criminal justice clients, whether they are released prisoners or people on bail. There is currently a limited supply of affordable and/or social housing (National Housing Supply Council 2013) available to must meet the needs of criminal justice clients as well as the needs of people seeking to escape homelessness or domestic violence, those experiencing disadvantage linked to mental health or disability, and those on lower incomes. Engagement with government and non-government—for supporting people in the private rental market—housing providers is accordingly a central and critical element of providing effective housing support. Having a range of housing options available also helps by ensuring that services can respond not only to the range of individual and often complex needs presented by ex-prisoner clients but also to differences in the type and availability of houses across different areas.

Some suggestions for ways of increasing housing capacity for prisoners re-entering the community can be found in a guide developed for policymakers by the US Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center (Cortes & Rogers 2010). The guide suggests three approaches to increasing housing capacity for this population: greater access, increased housing stock and revitalised neighbourhoods.

Greater access involves maximising the use of existing social and private housing stock by helping released prisoners to find and maintain affordable housing. One strategy for achieving this might be engaging with non-government service providers who have a history of tenancy advocacy for clients with challenging behaviours and complex needs. Using existing stock and improving access through the use of rental assistance and housing placement services saves substantial capital costs, and can facilitate a smoother transition into ongoing unsupported housing for clients who do not need ongoing support. The main challenge in using existing housing stock is the very limited stock that is available in areas where there may be low vacancy rates and high demand among those in need of affordable housing. Substantial service provider resources may be required to identify potentially suitable properties; work with private landlords and agencies to make more properties available to low-income clients; assess clients for eligibility; and conduct advocacy and liaison with property owners to ensure the tenancy can be maintained if problems arise. An additional challenge can be the concentration of affordable housing stock in areas of high relative disadvantage, where limited resources and potentially negative social influences could impede an offender's reintegration (Cortes & Rogers 2010).

Increased housing stock is a way of directly expanding housing options and availability, particularly in areas with tight housing markets. This option involves either locating suitable property that is vacant or can be redeveloped, or constructing appropriate housing. To the extent that land is available, this approach means that purpose-built housing services can potentially be concentrated in areas selected for the purpose. Nonetheless, this approach faces challenges due to the substantial funding required and the need to establish appropriate partners for what may be a high-risk venture requiring a long-term commitment. It also depends on land being available (Cortes & Rogers 2010). There is also a strong likelihood that communities would mount challenges to housing for criminal justice clients being located in their area.

Revitalised neighbourhoods represent a third approach to increasing housing capacity and availability. This involves government and non-government service providers working together to improve services, supports and—potentially—infrastructure for the benefit of the whole community. By improving community life and safety for all residents, the negative perceptions of offenders coming into an area can be reduced, which can in turn ease the integration of former prisoners and their families into the wider community. This community redevelopment approach requires substantial planning, resources, time and commitment, and the application of effective evaluation to ensure long-term benefits are sustained (Cortes & Rogers 2010). Cortes and Rogers also note that dedicated re-entry programs sometimes experience challenges due to community concern about limited resources being allocated to people returning from prison. However, this issue does not usually arise, as revitalisation brings improvements right across the community (Cortes & Rogers 2010).

Housing options

In addition to guidance on these three approaches to increasing housing capacity, the CSG Justice Center guidebook provides a useful tabular summary of housing options that might be available to support prisoner integration. This summary, with some modifications to ensure relevance to Australian conditions, is set out in Table 1.

Private rental		
Features	Benefits	Limitations
Rental properties in the private rental market, secured on an individual basis	- Most commonly available option across all communities - Can be fully or partly funded through government rental assistance - Provides the greatest freedom of choice for individuals—subject to availability, a client can choose a property accessible to work, family, treatment etc.	- Private owners and agents may not make properties available to applicants with criminal records or to certain categories of offender - Some clients may not be eligible for rental assistance - Access is subject to market forces affecting prices and vacancy rates - Tenancy may be particularly vulnerable to withdrawal (due to falling behind in rent, complaints from neighbours etc.) without advocacy
Public/social housing		
Features	Benefits	Limitations
- Housing is publicly owned and managed by the government, either directly or through arrangements with service providers - Priority and eligibility are determined by public housing authorities using standard policies and criteria - Rent may be subsidised	- Government retains control of eligibility and access - Dedicated units or properties can be made available for clients on the basis of needs or classifications - Generally more affordable - Housing authority has more control over how to respond to tenancy difficulties	- Housing stock is limited and generally subject to excessive demand, resulting in very long waiting lists for clients not deemed to be high priority - Maintaining and replacing stock may not be fiscally efficient - Properties can be in very disadvantaged areas or of poor design, particularly older properties - Tenants may be exposed to negative social influences and stigma from the wider community
Community housing		
Features	Benefits	Limitations
- May be owned and managed by service providers or private owners - Rent and utility costs may be subsidised by government - Dedicated to low-income or disadvantaged clients	- Generally more affordable than private market (although there can be crossovers) - Eligibility criteria may be more flexible or inclusive than public housing - May have on-site services	- Housing stock and availability may be limited - May not be cost-effective compared with other options - Some offenders may be considered ineligible or otherwise excluded - May be difficult to balance needs of different client groups

Boarding houses		
Features	Benefits	Limitations
- Provides accommodation in periods immediately after release - Generally highly structured with strict rules and expectations, including release conditions - Treatment and services generally included as part of the model	- Provides transitional environment to support and promote reintegration - Clients can have readily accessible, tailored and monitored treatment and services	- Typically short-term - Some clients may struggle to comply with rules, perhaps leading to breach of conditional release orders and return to custody - Some clients may find environment too similar to being custody and struggle with relative lack of freedom - Can be a challenging environment to manage, including potential conflict and negative influences between clients
Supportive housing		
Features	Benefits	Limitations
- Rental contribution and costs may be contained and subsidised - Treatment and services linked to housing - Typically managed by non-government and community-based service providers	- Tailored to needs of disadvantaged clients with complex issues - Treatment and services tailored to the individual - Can be long-term - Can promote pro-social engagement with the community together with community and professional support	- May be difficult to meet the needs of groups of clients with diverse and complex needs and sometimes challenging behaviours - Can be resource-intensive - May be unsuitable for some categories of offenders (eg sex offenders) - Clients who do not respond well to supportive housing may have few other options
Specialised re-entry or reintegration housing		
Features	Benefits	Limitations
Specialised for criminal justice clients, usually under supervision orders	- Can be individually tailored to the needs of clients with offending backgrounds and typically complex needs and challenging behaviours - Services and treatment programs can be aligned with criminogenic needs and delivered by trained staff - Opportunities for mentoring and peer relationship - Reduced likelihood of difficulties between criminal justice and other clients	- Managing a residential population can be difficult and resource-intensive - Potential for violence or conflict between clients, particularly in the absence of comprehensive risk assessments - As with some of the above forms of housing, may be difficult to find a location where housing can be established without community resistance - Generally short-term

Source: Adapted from Cortes & Rogers 2010

Supported housing in practice

This section outlines examples of some of the housing support programs currently in place in Australia and internationally. It also examines the limited evidence available from housing programs targeting vulnerable groups within corrections populations. The section concludes with a focused consideration of the role of TSOs in supported housing service delivery.

Australia

Queensland

The Queensland Offender Reintegration Support Service (ORSS) provides case-managed reintegration support to people leaving prison, for up to six months post-release (Queensland Corrective Services 2012). It is the only service funded by Queensland Corrective Services to provide this support. ORSS provides direct support to ex-prisoners in the form of assisting with securing housing, attendance at probation and parole appointments, and engaging with employment services. The program also provides brokerage and advocacy for prisoners accessing other rehabilitative services. A survey of 42 ex-prisoners who were clients of Catholic Prison Ministry, an ORSS service provider, found that a large majority (88%) had been offered ORSS services while in prison—in preparation for release—mostly in the form of assistance with transport from prison to accommodation (Wong, Tyle & Lindsay 2014). Notably, however, just under half of the respondents (45%) had not communicated with their ORSS worker after release, while most of the remainder had very limited contact. Only 16 percent had been in contact with their ORSS worker more than once in the six months post-release. Only 13 percent of respondents had received accommodation assistance, despite 57 percent being offered that assistance whilst in prison. Only one respondent had been successful in securing accommodation, but was finding it too expensive.

South Australia

The South Australian Integrated Housing Exits Program (IHEP) aims to reduce exits from prison into homelessness as well as reducing recidivism among those leaving custody in that state (SA Department for Communities and Social Inclusion 2013). The IHEP is delivered by several providers: Housing SA; Preferred Growth Providers (PGPs); and, for adult prisoners, Offender Aid and Rehabilitation Services (OARS) as a Preferred Support Provider (PSP).

PGPs are providers assessed by Housing SA as capable of significant growth. They may have additional properties for specific housing programs for people with approved support arrangements (CHCSA 2016). A PSP is a service provider assessed by Housing SA as the most appropriate organisation to deliver housing support services for a particular client group.

IHEP is jointly funded through Housing SA by the Commonwealth and the South Australian Government, pursuant to the Council of Australian Governments National Affordable Housing Agreement (COAG 2013). IHEP provides housing support, either directly through allocation to one of 60 IHEP properties or through referral to other housing options. A further 20 properties are available under the IHEP Youth Justice Program. IHEP is based on Housing First, an approach to homelessness that centres on providing housing as the first priority, with other services put in place after stable housing is provided, with a case management plan directing support. Where necessary, IHEP workers adopt an Assertive Case Management approach, actively seeking to engage reluctant and difficult-to-engage clients.

Under the IHEP arrangements, South Australian Department for Correctional Services (DCS) staff who identify specific housing needs for sentenced prisoners and remandees refer them to the Housing SA Outreach Program for a Housing Needs Assessment. Those assessed as Category 1 by Housing SA assessment processes (indicating urgent housing needs with long-term barriers to accessing or maintaining private housing) are referred to the DCS IHEP Coordinator. The Coordinator then works with a PGP or Housing SA worker to determine an appropriate placement. Once a client has been placed in housing and case-managed services have been established, support continues until case management review determines it is no longer required; the prevailing consideration is to ensure the client does not exit into homelessness. Where necessary, the client will be supported to access home ownership, private rental or social housing (SA Department for Communities and Social Inclusion 2013). This approach has been criticised by some Housing Trust tenants and tenants' associations, who see ex-prisoners as being unfairly prioritised over non-offending tenants on social housing waiting lists (Kemp 2016).

United States

Bissonette House is a transitional housing service in Buffalo New York provided by the Peaceprints organisation. The service is available to men leaving prison through self-referral or through referral by Buffalo Parole Officers who believe referred offenders will benefit from the program (Peaceprints nd). Bissonette House considers all offenders under Community Supervision orders, other than those convicted of sex or arson offences. It operates as a community living facility where residents are expected to participate in chores, share meals, engage in spiritual and meditation activities as well as other in-house and community activities. Each resident is expected to meet for individual case meetings with the house Case Manager at an agreed time weekly, with these appointments scheduled to take into account other individual commitments including parole requirements (Peaceprints nd).

Peaceprints also operates a supportive housing program, Hope House, for men moving on from transitional housing towards full reintegration into the community. Hope House offers eight private rooms with full residential facilities where residents are responsible for paying rent and utilities, cleaning, purchasing their own goods and abiding by release conditions. Meetings to support residents' continued personal growth are held once a week, and the residence has a live-in Housing Coordinator who supports residents on a daily basis. The service does not place a time limit on stays, with the length of residency dependent on individual circumstances and establishing and meeting personal goals (Peaceprints nd).

A transitional housing model with similarities to Bissonette House is the HOPE Resource Center, operated by HOPE Services Hawaii. The Center provides transitional housing for both men and women with 24/7 staffing and random on-site drug testing to ensure maintenance of a sober living environment (HOPE Services Hawaii 2015). Daily evening classes are provided at the Center, including relapse prevention groups, gender specific support groups, methamphetamine groups, and budgeting and life skills classes. The program is funded by the US Department of Human Services, the County of Hawaii, and two community organisations. In addition to transitional housing services, HOPE Services Hawaii offers permanent, low-income housing for men, women and families through a multi-unit development which also provides transitional housing and has a resident manager. Elsewhere in Hawaii, HOPE Services provides emergency shelter for homeless individuals and families, as well as a scattered-site transitional housing service (Hope Services Hawaii 2015).

A report by the Vermont State Auditor highlighted some of the important issues for governments to monitor when resourcing housing programs for ex-prisoners in their jurisdiction (Hoffer 2015). The Auditor investigated a transitional housing program funded by the Vermont Department of Corrections (DoC). He found that transitional housing grantees often did not develop offender services (services providing transitional housing) plans, as required by the DoC. Of the nine service provider grantees examined, only one provided plans for all offender clients and two did not provide any (Hoffer 2015). Altogether, 35 percent of offenders did not have service plans; of those that did, only five percent were approved by DoC (Hoffer 2015). As a result, DoC was unable to provide an assurance that the vast majority of offenders were receiving appropriate, individualised services. The reasons for these failures

included ineffective DoC program management, a lack of awareness by grantees of their obligations, and a lack of consequences for non-compliance by grantees. Further to this, each of the nine grantees provided inaccurate or unsupported documentation about the services they provided. The Auditor further found that, while DoC had implemented performance measures for its goal of supporting community reintegration and re-entry, it had not established performance measure or targets or collected any data regarding its goals of maintaining public safety or reducing recidivism (Hoffer 2015).

Canada

In Canada, supported housing practice is based around two key avenues of support, Community-Based Residential Facilities and Community Correctional Centres.

Community-Based Residential Facilities

Halfway houses, managed by the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) or non-government service providers, have been in operation in Canada since the 1940s (White 2003). In their current form they are known as Community-Based Residential Facilities (CBRFs). These facilities provide community-based residential accommodation for offenders serving part of their sentence through community-based supervision (Atlantic Halfway House Association [AHAA] 2015). CBRFs are owned by non-government agencies that provide services to CSC under contract (CSC 2015). While they are typically houses, CBRFs may also be hostels, placements in private homes or supervised apartments (CSC 2015). The halfway house model allows offenders to seek employment or education, and/or attend specific support activities such as drug and alcohol programs or mental health treatment. Residents must follow a set of house rules and participate in cleaning and maintaining the property (AHAA 2015).

Offenders considered for CBRFs undergo comprehensive risk assessments, and the facilities adopt strict admission and discharge policies (AHAA 2015). Halfway houses can refuse offenders for various reasons and offenders face the threat of return to prison if they breach release conditions. Specific programs and treatment are available for offenders with mental health or substance use issues.

Halfway houses contribute to community safety by providing a way for offenders to gradually reintegrate into the community. This has been shown to contribute to reduced recidivism (see John Howard Society 2001; AHAA 2015). Studies conducted in Canada have shown that the presence of halfway houses does not negatively impact on residential property values, and that this form of supported housing is cost-effective when compared with incarceration (see John Howard Society 2001, AHAA 2015).

Community Correctional Centres

Community Correctional Centres (CCCs) are minimum-security facilities operated directly by the CSC. These are distinct from halfway houses, or CBRFs. CCCs accommodate offenders on various forms of release, as well as offenders on full parole and certain long-term supervision orders with residency conditions (CSC 2015). Over time the role of CCCs has broadened from initially accommodating offenders on day parole near the end of their sentences to accommodating offenders on a variety of conditional release orders (OCI 2014). Based on 2014 figures, a little over half of the offenders in CCCs are on statutory release, a quarter are on a long-term supervision order and most of the remainder are on day parole (OCI 2014). Around two percent of offenders in CCCs across Canada are on full parole, and virtually all offenders in CCCs are male (OCI 2014). Some 19 percent of CCC residents are Canadian Aboriginal and this group is overrepresented among offenders who are assigned a residency condition by the parole board (OCI 2014). A little over three quarters of all CCC residents in 2014 had committed violent offences and were considered at high risk of reoffending, while just over half were assessed as having low potential for successful reintegration. Seventy percent were assessed as high-needs across various domains (OCI 2014). Halfway houses in Canada usually do not accept sex offenders, which means that CCCs are the only community-based residential option available to support these offenders on various forms of release.

Within CCCs, corrections, parole and support staff often work in cooperation with community partners to provide services and programs for offenders—linked to their offending behaviours—and to prepare them for release (OCI 2014). As minimum-security correctional facilities, CCCs provide a very structured environment which includes continuous supervision and monitoring, curfews and leave privileges, and sign-in/sign-out procedures. An examination by the Canadian Office of the Correctional Investigator (OCI) revealed a lack of consistency between and within CCCs in the enforcement of disciplinary rules and in the provision of programming and services (OCI 2014). It also found substantial variation in the extent to which CCCs engaged with the community; staff in some centres had ongoing engagement with business and community groups, while others deliberately remained insular and sought to avoid community engagement (OCI 2014).

United Kingdom and Europe

The Supporting Prisoners Advice Network (SPAN) is an initiative of Shelter Scotland, the housing and homelessness charity (Shelter nd). In partnership with a citizens' advice bureau and the Scottish offender rehabilitation and support service, SPAN has working arrangements with three Scottish prisons and is funded through national lottery revenue. The service provides assistance with homelessness, rent arrears, government housing benefits, finding and applying for accommodation, and maintaining accommodation. SPAN aims to provide what might be called a 'whole of housing' service. Targeted support is maintained until clients are established in safe and secure accommodation and able to access education, training or employment. SPAN maintains working relationships with a broad range of government and non-government service providers and criminal justice agencies (Shelter nd).

A similar service to SPAN is provided in Wales through Prison Link Cymru, an initiative of Shelter Cymru and the Tai Trothwy housing agency. This is a national prison link service which covers all of Wales and works with supported housing providers, private landlords, bond schemes, housing associations and local authorities (Shelter Cymru nd). The service also connects with prison resettlement teams, transitional support services, drug intervention programs and the probation service. Prison Link Cymru aims to work with prisoners on remand or serving short sentences who may have accommodation they can return to, and to work with other clients to address their housing problems while they are in prison. Support provided typically includes resolving issues with government housing benefits and contacting landlords to resolve problems with previous tenancies to lessen the chance of future tenancy opportunities being jeopardised.

There is little information available in English on supported housing and post-release programs in continental Europe, noting that no foreign language literature was considered in this review. This may be due to the different approaches taken to managing offenders adopted in some European countries compared with the US, the UK and Australia. These differences were highlighted in a report by the Vera Institute of Justice which compared sentencing and prisoner management practices in Germany and the Netherlands with those in the US (Subramanian & Shames 2013).

Imprisonment rates in Germany (79 per 100,000 residents) and the Netherlands (82 per 100,000 residents) are lower than in Australia (185.6 per 100,000 residents) and markedly lower than in the US (716 per 100,000 residents), and some jurisdictions in both Australia and the US have rates which are substantially higher than the national rate (ABS 2014; Subramanian & Shames 2013).

Germany and the Netherlands also differ from the US and Australia in actively fostering 'normalised' custodial environments that are as similar to the general community as reasonably possible, with central tenets of resocialisation and rehabilitation dominant in both countries (Subramanian & Shames 2013). German and Dutch prisoners wear their own clothes and prepare their own meals, as well as being allowed individual expression in their living environments and given the capacity to exercise a substantial amount of control over their daily lives. In both countries, prisoners retain their rights to vote and often receive social welfare benefits. It is common for German and Dutch prisoners to spend time out of prison, including spending weekends with families, working on their relationships and practicing what they have learned in rehabilitative programs (Subramanian & Shames 2013). Short-term or extended home leave to visit family or search for work and accommodation is routinely granted. The proportion of prisoners failing to return to prison from this leave is in the order of one percent.

One consequence of these practices of normalisation is that there is little need for Germany or the Netherlands to provide housing services for released prisoners. German and Dutch offenders have much more opportunity to maintain preincarceration accommodation and relationships than American or Australian prisoners, as well as having greater opportunities to secure accommodation before they are released. They are also more likely to leave prison with the life skills needed to maintain stable housing.

Similarities to the German and Dutch approaches can be seen in other European countries. Prison conditions in Scandinavian countries are also based around a belief that they should parallel conditions in the community as closely as possible (Ward et al. 2013). In the open facilities which many prisoners move to as they approach the end of their sentences, there is emphasis on both rehabilitation and normalisation (Ward et al. 2013). Conditions in these open prisons aim to reflect those in the general community and prisoners are afforded a substantial degree of freedom. The Norwegian model of halfway houses for prisoners nearing the end of their sentences has recently been adopted in Lithuania, starting with four houses which were expected to open in late 2015 or early 2016 (*The Lithuanian Tribune* 25 October 2014 <http://en.delfi.lt/lithuania/society/lithuania-to-open-norwegian-style-halfway-houses-to-transition-prison-inmates-into-freedom.d?id=66210834>). However, further information on whether these have opened as anticipated was not available at the time of writing.

Special needs groups

Sex offenders

Sex offenders face additional barriers to accessing stable housing on release from prison. People convicted of sex offences, particularly offences involving children, may have strict conditions imposed on them which restrict the areas in which they can live. These conditions typically involve not living within a specified distance of schools, childcare centres and playgrounds. Sex offenders carry a greater degree of stigma than most other offenders, in addition to dealing with the challenges which face other offenders on release, such as limited income, lack of life skills and shortages in housing availability (Kras, Pleggenkuhle & Huebner 2014). Sex offenders can also experience high levels of psychosocial stress, and may be more likely to becoming homeless after release than most other offender groups (Levenson et al. 2013).

A recent study examined the re-entry experiences of sex offenders residing in transitional housing in the US state of Missouri (Kras, Pleggenkuhle & Huebner 2014). Sex offenders entered transitional housing facilities for one of the following three reasons:

- lacking the financial means or social support to secure other housing;
- other housing options—including residing with family—not being available due to restrictions on residency and supervision requirements; in some cases sex offenders with only adult victims were restricted from residing within a given distance of environments where children would be present; or
- being remanded to the transitional facility for a technical violation of parole conditions (Kras, Pleggenkuhle & Huebner 2014).

Several of the sex offenders interviewed for the Missouri study reported experiencing stigmatisation within the transitional facility. Many experienced the transitional environment as a form of punishment, with conditions similar to prison and exposure to active drug users (Kras, Pleggenkuhle & Huebner 2014). Several of those interviewed were unable to obtain suitable housing or employment and therefore found it hard to find a pathway out of the transitional housing facility. Living in transitional housing was identified as a barrier to employment, due to the facility attracting negative perceptions from potential employers, and due also to the inability of offenders to receive direct phone calls from employers.

Another study highlighting the difficulties of securing housing for sex offenders looked at the work of a committee in Wisconsin US that was tasked with siting a facility for sexually violent offenders under supervised conditional release (Stojkovic & Farkas 2013). The committee was required to find a site that met a range of criteria under sex offender legislation, most notably ensuring a minimum distance from any facility for children and from other sensitive areas, including nursing homes and community centres. The committee also had to take into account zoning requirements, appropriateness of the site for a residential building, and financial considerations. This severely restricted the number of suitable sites—particularly in the city of Milwaukee, given its population density. Light industrial areas presented as the most likely suitable locations.

To assist its search for a location, the committee drew on maps, information on the residential locations of supervised sex offenders already resident in the area and crime data. The committee also sought assistance from real estate agents. Of the 44 real estate agents contacted by the committee, only one responded and agreed to assist (Stojkovic & Farkas 2013). The committee also received little support from citizens during public consultation hearings. Both the Sheriff and Mayor of the city issued statements asserting the need to keep sexually violent offenders separated from other residents, and that the wishes and needs of those other residents should be considered first (Stojkovic & Farkas 2013).

The committee ultimately failed in its efforts: no facility was found or built to house the sex offenders (Stojkovic & Farkas 2013). The experiences of the committee highlighted the need for substantial education and awareness-raising—both for the public and for relevant authorities—about the need to house sex offenders, and the consequences of not being able to do so appropriately, including the possibility that sex offenders may become homeless or find themselves in unstable accommodation (Stojkovic & Farkas 2013). The authors, one of whom was a member of the committee, attributed a large degree of this failure to the unwillingness of public officials in Milwaukee to either educate themselves about the issues or find ways of addressing them. The authors also emphasised the importance of establishing strong and clear mechanisms for supervising and managing sex offenders in the community. One possibility suggested by the authors was the use of so-called ‘circles of support and accountability’ through which trained community volunteers assist and support offenders and hold them accountable for their actions (Stojkovic & Farkas 2013).

Indigenous Australians

Research has not addressed issues of supportive housing for Indigenous Australians. While Parsell and Phillips (2014) have shown ways in which cultural assumptions about Indigenous Australians affect the treatment of homeless Indigenous people, the literature is silent on adaptations of supportive housing for this group

Third sector organisations

Across the different forms of housing support that are available to prisoners, a broad range of third sector organisations (TSOs) provide assistance in the form of information, referrals and direct housing provision, often in partnership with criminal justice agencies (Mills et al. 2013). In order to examine the role of TSOs in providing housing support to prisoners, a research team from New Zealand and the UK undertook interviews with 254 prison and TSO staff and conducted a survey of 680 prisoners across eight prisons in the UK. These eight prisons collectively had links with 37 housing-related TSOs (Mills et al. 2013).

The study found only limited awareness of housing services among prisoners. Only 21 percent of prisoners surveyed had heard of at least one of the organisations, and only four percent of prisoners surveyed had made use of TSO housing services (Mills et al. 2013). Against this background, 10 percent of prisoners surveyed identified a lack of specialist housing TSOs as a key area for improvement. Lower levels of engagement with TSOs were reported by female prisoners, as well as those from non-British Black, Asian and mixed ethnic backgrounds. Young respondents reported less awareness and involvement with housing-related TSOs than adults. However, as the authors noted, these findings may have reflected a lack of TSOs offering housing to these sub-populations (Mills et al. 2013).

The surveys and interviews undertaken for this research identified some of the barriers faced by prisoners in trying to access housing-related services from TSOs, as well as the problems faced by TSOs in delivering services. Many of the TSOs operated with very limited resources and very few staff. As a result, they interpreted eligibility criteria very strictly and applied the criteria narrowly, as they did not have the capacity to support a wider pool of eligible prisoners. Even among those who were deemed eligible, resource constraints meant that some TSOs were reluctant to take on prisoners with complex needs. One specific problem identified in housing choice was a failure to consider the need to promote desistance and reduce reoffending (Mills et al. 2013). Offenders were sometimes accommodated in areas well away from support agencies, workplaces or pro-social peer influences. In some cases, offenders faced increased risk of breaching probation and parole appointments due to transportation difficulties. These location-related problems seemed to arise particularly when housing providers worked with strict criteria for their catchment areas which constrained the areas in which offenders could be accommodated—even when more suitably located housing was potentially available.

In considering their findings, the authors suggested that the reluctance to accommodate offenders—expressed by social and private housing providers—could be partly alleviated by providing guarantees of rental payments, or providing support packages that reduced the risks to providers. However, the authors also recognised the fiscal constraints facing corrections agencies and TSOs. The authors noted that while stable housing is a fundamentally important element of re-entry programs, the objectives of reintegration and rehabilitation require approaches that provide additional support, such as monitoring and crisis interventions (Mills et al. 2013).

Conclusion

This review of the literature on supported housing for people leaving prison custody has built on the findings of two earlier literature reviews, conducted in 2010 and 2013. While the earlier reviews were broader in scope and looked at issues of best practice in the provision of housing-related services for offenders exiting the prison system, the current review has taken into account their findings. It has also taken into account a positive evaluation of the Corrections Victoria Housing Program, which identified the value of that program in making stable housing available to people who might otherwise be leaving prison into circumstances of housing stress and perhaps homelessness.

The main findings of the current literature review do not vary greatly from the two earlier reviews, but they do provide an additional level of evidence and degree of clarity to the findings of those reviews. The literature provides further support for the contention that transitional and housing support services have the potential to reduce recidivism, thereby bringing direct benefits to clients, increasing community safety, and reducing criminal justice system costs. The capacity of housing support to yield cost savings is particularly pertinent, since the current fiscal environment—together with responses to fiscal constraints such as the development of justice reinvestment strategies—demands cost-effective criminal justice system responses. While supported housing initiatives can be resource-intensive, there is evidence to suggest that they are nonetheless more cost-effective than imprisonment and can contribute to reduced reoffending. Supported housing initiatives can also require substantial capital inputs, which may produce medium-term cost savings but may also come at the expense of opportunity costs for government. The emergence in recent years of various forms of social impact investment—such as social impact bonds or Payment by Results approaches—provides innovative models whereby governments can deliver social programs without upfront investment or risks.

Earlier reviews of the literature suggested that there is no single best-practice model for delivering housing-related services. That remains the case. Rather, the evidence suggests the need for flexible models that are adaptable to individual circumstances. Good practice appears less directly linked to the practices of service providers and more to ensuring that services are centred on the individual and their capacity to make decisions about their own circumstances. At the same time, supporting the individual to realise that capacity requires a holistic approach to service delivery involving collaborative, multi-agency and multi-disciplinary ways of working. A number of promising practices emerge from partnerships between criminal justice, housing and broader social support agencies. Working in partnership provides opportunities for each of these agencies

to contribute from a position of strength, aligned to their areas of primary responsibility and expertise. Importantly, too, these partnerships provide ways of facilitating the types of client contacts and interagency communications that are necessary for achieving throughcare goals.

The literature traverses a number of different models through which supportive or supported housing can be delivered. The Common Ground supportive housing model is gaining prominence in Australia, promoted by an alliance of housing providers across several states. This model is based on congregate housing with support and social services available onsite. It contrasts with scattered-site models that utilise dispersed accommodation with clients receiving support services on an outreach basis. There is no clear evidence in the literature of either model being superior in effectiveness or against other measures. Indeed, within each of the broad models, practice manifests in a range of variations that bring together features of each model, increasing the capacity of each program to meet the individual needs of clients.

Similarly, there is no clear evidence to suggest whether housing programs for released prisoners should be funded, managed and delivered by the corrective services agency, by housing providers, or by some combined arrangement. A range of models are in place, with responsibilities falling to different agencies or to various collaborative and partnership arrangements involving government and/or non-government agencies. Issues of leadership in supported housing delivery appear to be best resolved within individual jurisdictions and under local arrangements.

Many of the programs currently operating do not stipulate time frames or limits on either the housing or the accompanying services that are provided. Housing and support services are typically available for as long as the client needs them, consistent with the goals of achieving ongoing stability and minimising the possibility of the client returning to homelessness or housing crisis. As supportive housing models are usually implemented for clients with psychiatric disorders or other chronic needs which would tend to place them permanently at risk of housing instability, these models accept the possibility that clients may never exit the service. At the same time, it is important that housing providers work with clients on exit planning to ensure that those who are able to do so move onto independent living, in order to free housing and service resources to meet continuing demand.

There are areas in the literature that remain unclear or inconclusive. There are few rigorous evaluations of different housing models and few studies that focus on criminal justice populations. The variability of supported housing models limits the extent to which the literature can inform questions about separations of responsibility or the most appropriate roles to be adopted by each of the agencies involved in a partnership. While social impact investment strategies offer promise, and their early application in housing and criminal justice contexts appears to have met government expectations, there has not yet been time to properly examine their effectiveness or their impact on financial markets.

Coupled with social impact investment strategies, the relative openness of potential models for delivering housing supports to ex-prisoner clients creates opportunities for state and territory corrections agencies to be innovative in their approaches to housing support. Based on the available evidence, effective innovation will incorporate client-centred approaches that aim to build capacity for clients to firstly become secure and stable tenants, and then good and reliable tenants who are able to access and maintain tenancies through their own resources.

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