

LINK BETWEEN HOMELESSNESS & THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

The complex and often bi-directional links between homelessness and incarceration are well documented both nationally and internationally; with people who have spent time in prison experiencing much higher rates of homelessness than the general population.

Homelessness effects justice system interactions in four key ways:



Likelihood of being remanded in prison: The number of individuals nationally being imprisoned without a sentence has been rising the past few years.¹ Particularly for individuals experiencing homelessness as the very absence of a home means that bail or home detention are not options before court hearing.^{2,3}



Likelihood of parole: Not having a residential address is also an impediment to parole.⁴ A parole plan might also need a written commitment from a family member, friend, or welfare agency to assist the prisoner upon release. This process becomes challenging if the person lacks a home or family support, potentially leading to longer incarceration.



Risk of homelessness following prison release: A 2022 report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), found that two in five (43%) Australian prisoners reported being homeless within the four-weeks before incarceration, and half (48%) expected to be homeless upon their release.⁵



Risk of recidivism: There is growing evidence internationally^{6,7} and in Australia^{8,9} that people released from prison into unstable housing are more likely to re-offend. With overall lack of support for released prisoners, particularly in the period immediately following release a key contributing factor of this.¹⁰⁻¹²

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