

Update for WAAEH – 27 August 2026

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Preventing the homelessness and prison revolving door

Background

This is the second of a series of research impact projects being undertaken by the Home2Health team at UNDA on behalf of the Western Australian Alliance to End Homelessness (WAAEH).

It builds on issues raised by our team in a submission to the WA Parliamentary Inquiry into the Funding of Homelessness Services (see [Appendix 1](#) briefing note for further information) and the WAAEH hearing from early 2025, and overall increasing mentions of prison releases into homelessness by frontline homelessness services, A-Z communities, and in the Rough Sleepers Working group. The following feedback in April 2025 was the catalyst for WAAEH and H2H team initiating a request to meet with the Department of Justice.

At today's Perth Rough Sleepers Coordination Group meeting, it was noted that there has been an increase in the number of individuals being released from prison into homelessness. Concerns were raised regarding the timing of many of these releases, which are occurring over weekends when support services are unavailable. Homelessness accommodation providers have also reported a rise in referrals from correctional facilities; however, these referrals are often unable to be accepted due to not aligning with the appropriate referral pathways.

The lack of routine data capture on the frequency of this issue by services (and by WA government Justice and Corrections departments) has perpetuated the invisibility of this issue in WA. In some other States, prison releases to no fixed address or homelessness are captured, but this is not the case in WA. Nor is there much transparency across government documentation regarding the impact of and how not having an address reduces the likelihood of bail, increases likelihood of being imprisoned on remand, and adversely impacting eligibility for parole.

The issue of homelessness and imprisonment has been a shared matter of concern between our team and WAAEH for several years and evolved to become our second impact project for the WAAEH. This was intentionally a less structured project as it was more exploratory in nature with an overall aim of:

Exploring data availability and gaps and advocacy opportunities to inform the prevention of the homelessness and prison revolving door.

Work Undertaken

- **Desktop identification of state/territory government funded pathways to housing for people exiting prison**, including what services and programs exist in WA and nationally.
- **Identification of data gaps** (with WAAEH via John Berger noting to our team that the issue increasingly being raised by A-Z teams, but BNL does not really capture any useful data on this).
- **Developed a typology** of the ways in which homelessness intersects with the justice system, both compounding the other (see [Appendix 2](#)).
- **Intentional investigation and inclusion of prison/homelessness nexus in other work undertaken for the WAAEH**. For example, in the evaluation of Engagement Hubs (see [Appendix 3](#) for excerpts)
- **Development of a briefing document for the Department of Justice** ahead of a meeting with senior Executives and the WAAEH (John Berger, Andy Kazim), H2H team (Lisa Wood). Comprehensive briefing note involved collating what evidence is available, identifying gaps, and seeking input from services (including interviews).

- **Meeting attendance (19 June 2025) with Department of Justice Senior Executive**, Kama Conolly (Assistant Commissioner Rehabilitation & Reintegration) and Anne Bougourd (Manager Transitional pathways). Unfortunately Commissioner Andy Beck was unable to attend as called into something urgent at the last minute but was included in follow-up communications.
- **Forging connections and collaborations with Justice focused organisations, groups and researchers to identify joint advocacy opportunities.** Including (but not limited to):
 - the *WA Justice Reform Initiative*;
 - *Street Law* (where parole and bail barriers are commonly observed);
 - *Pivot Support Services* (Albany);
 - *Outcare*;
 - *WA Justice Researchers: UWA (Dr Megan Bell), Murdoch (Dr Kate Davis), and Curtin (Dr Emma Tufuga)* who have identified housing insecurity as a key issue facing pregnant women and women with children who are in WA prisons.
 - As well as liaising with other services and programs in the homeless-justice space nationally (for example, the *Homeless Persons Legal Service* in NSW, the *Fitzroy Legal Service* in VIC, *Health Justice Australia*).
- **Liaising with services to ascertain what they are seeing ‘on the ground’ regarding people in or exiting the justice system with a risk of homelessness.** For example, through our collaborations with *KEMH WANDAS* and *Luma*, AOD and support needs are being identified for women who are getting out of prison in the near future with the *Luma Nurturing Families* program as a potential support pathway, and the same at times for other supports within *Luma*, only because we have the benefit of social workers / midwives being able to tell us potential release dates and support needed soon etc.
- **Encouraging Frontline services to record instances of prison releases into homelessness**, and offering H2H team advice regarding data capture/collation.
- **Investigation of possible data requests to make to WA government agencies relating to this.** For example Department of Housing Assessment form has ‘prison’ as one of the current living circumstances and reasons for needing public housing; Kama Connelly from the DOJ is making some inquiries for H2H re “*how we capture this data in WA when exiting prison, I would need to follow up further re: our systems and also our transition services area*”
- **Preliminary inquiries mid 2026 into prison diversion options in WA and whether homelessness impacts eligibility** (which it transpires it does for the Drug Court program but not for mental health Start Court).

Below is an example of the value of the point above about forging collaborations with other Justice-related organisations to amplify awareness raising and advocacy; this is from Kimberley Wild the WA Coordinator for the Justice Reform Initiative on 22 May 2025, following her being made aware of the WAAEH request to meet (with Lisa Wood representing H2H team) with Commissioner Andy Beck and Department of Justice Executive:

During our meeting with Director-General Kylie Maj and Commissioner Brad Royce on Monday morning, we discussed the impact of homelessness and housing on the prison population. It was the Commissioner who initially raised that his biggest problem regarding population pressures was housing and homelessness. We flagged your upcoming meeting with Deputy Commissioner Andy Beck, and both the DG and Commissioner were glad to hear about it. We did ask about data collection and got a non-committal answer so do push on that during your meeting. As we had limited time, and I know you’re meeting in a couple of weeks, we moved on to other agenda items. The Commissioner told us he’s recently visited a parole hostel in Victoria and they are considering and developing various business cases for government. Unfortunately, adult prisons are not a

priority for the elected government so a lot of the business cases they have put up have been rejected.

Perhaps, following your meeting with Andy Beck, we can consider a joint letter to the Premier and Treasurer to lobby them for action focussed on reducing releases to homelessness.

Next Steps

- **Follow up with Department of Justice.** Due to changes in WAAEH staff, some momentum was lost regarding further follow-up with Department of Justice. This could be resumed, and the Justice Reform Initiative suggestion of further joint advocacy on this has merit.
- **Continuing opportunistic advocacy and evidence gathering.** The Home2Health team is happy to keep undertaking opportunistic advocacy and data gathering on this issue as opportunity arises.
- **[for consideration] - It would be a good subtopic for a future Pulse session.** This could include in this a brief overview of the innovative CRESS program the H2H team is evaluating for St Vincent's Homeless Health Service Sydney that is supporting people who have cycled between homelessness and the Justice system. There are also some good examples of on the ground cross-sector collaboration on this issue in Sydney that could be useful for WA.
- **[where opportunity arises/funding available] - Implement Recommendation 1.2.5 from the Engagement Hub evaluation** (provided in [Appendix 3](#)) regarding undertaking a brief monthly audit of the Hubs regarding emerging trends including the number of prison releases into homelessness observed. Ruah (drop in and safe night space), Tranby, and Passages have already undertaken similar investigations/audits for us and have indicated interest in continued participation in related advocacy issues.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Homelessness and Prison Intersect briefing note prepared for Department of Justice meeting in June 2025.

Appendix 2: Typology of links between homelessness and justice system.

Appendix 3: Engagement Hub Evaluation excerpts relating to prisons and homelessness nexus. The full report can be accessed here: www.home2health.org/publications/hubs