



Media release – Sunday 11 November 2018

More dedicated housing for prisoners would reduce re-offending and homelessness: peak

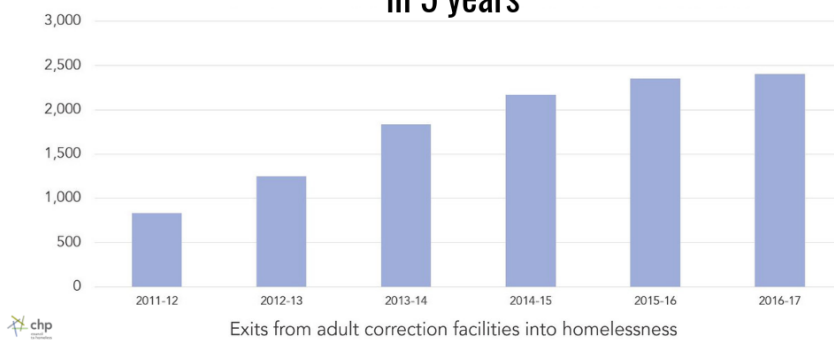
The peak body for homelessness in Victoria is calling on the next state Government to provide more support and housing for people when they leave prison, as well as support at the point that they enter the prison system, with Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) data showing a 188% increase in prisoner exits into homelessness over the last five years.

‘Upon release, ex-offenders without family or other support networks are highly vulnerable to homelessness,’ says Jenny Smith, CEO, Council to Homeless Persons (CHP)

‘They often find themselves in rooming houses and crisis accommodation where they have no hope of getting their life back on track.’

‘If we provided dedicated housing for this group, we’d reduce homelessness, and also reduce crime,’ said Ms Smith.

In Victoria, prisoner exits into homelessness have risen 188% in 5 years



In its [Homelessness Election Platform](#), CHP also says that Victoria’s recent bail reforms mean an increasing number of people have little forewarning of their incarceration, and therefore no opportunity to get their affairs in order – advising their employer of their absence, setting up payment plans to pay the rent, clearing their property of their belongings, etc.

They cited the recent case of Hazel*, a woman in her 50s imprisoned for crimes related to her gambling addiction, who was unable to notify her landlord, or pay the rent during her short incarceration. She lost her rental, and her job during her time in prison. Hazel was

subsequently released into a rooming house where her mental health deteriorated and she has been unable to secure a new job.

'If we could help people like Hazel to get their affairs in order before they go into prison, we'd save so much trauma upon their release,' said Ms Smith.

An unanticipated impact of the increasing use of remand in Victoria is that a growing number of people will be imprisoned with little notice, leading them to lose their job, stop paying the rent, get blacklisted by real estate agents etc.

CHP says that those who are unexpectedly imprisoned require support to put their affairs in order. **Media inquiries: Lanie Harris, lanie@chp.org.au or 0418 552 377**

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